

Sūrah Zukhruf

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous Sūrah

This *sūrah* forms a pair with the previous one. For this reason, there is not much difference between the central themes of both. Like other *sūrahs* of the group, the central theme of this *sūrah* too is *tawḥīd* (monotheism), and it is to highlight the importance of *tawḥīd* that the Day of Judgement is also mentioned. In particular, the divinity of the angels and the concept of their intercession is refuted in detail, and a rebuttal is sounded to the claim of the Quraysh that the religion of polytheism that they are following was inherited by them from Abraham (sws).

In the previous *sūrah*, the exaltedness of the Qur'ān was highlighted from a specific aspect. In this *sūrah*, by highlighting some other aspects of this exaltedness, the Quraysh are warned that if merely because of conceit in their worldly riches they do not duly value the Qur'ān, then they should remember that the only responsibility of the Prophet (sws) was to communicate it to them; the responsibility of its denial will rest on them.

The answers to the objections which the opponents had raised on the Qur'ān viz a viz the nature of revelation and which they were making as an excuse for rejecting it have been given in the previous *sūrahs*. In this *sūrah*, the harmony of the Qur'ān with the message of the previous prophets is explained: the religion of *tawḥīd* which the Qur'ān is calling them too is the very one which all prophets called people to. Those who are denying it are only calling for their doom – the doom which befell other nations who rejected their respective prophets.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-8): The favour done by the Almighty to the Arabs by revealing the Qur'ān to them and the conclusive communication of the truth as a result of it are mentioned. The Quraysh are reminded that if they too deny their messenger like the previous nations, then they too shall meet the fate they met, and they should remember that these previous nations were far ahead of them in might and majesty.

Verses (9-15): The confession of the opponents of Islam that the Powerful and Knowledgeable God has created these heavens and the earth is referred to. However, in spite of this confession, they have set up

partners with God from among his servants. The fact of the matter is that the signs of God's power, providence, wisdom present at every step of this universe bear witness to monotheism and the Day of Judgement.

Verses (16-25): The conception of the divinity of the angels is refuted through two aspects.

The first of these is that people regard the angels to be the daughters of God even though they dislike having daughters for themselves. Not linking something for their own selves and ascribing it to God is absolute foolishness and showing disrespect to the powerful and majestic God.

The second of these is that the only argument they have to associate the angels in Godhead is that their forefathers regarded this to be so. The truth of the matter is that this is no argument of the veracity of a view. They should either present evidence from the Book of God or from human intellect and nature; otherwise, they should get ready to face the fate which was met by the nations who refuted their messengers by presenting such lame excuses

Verses (26-28): In the light of historical evidence, a refutation is made of the claim of the Idolaters that they inherited their religion of Idolatry from their forefathers. Their real ancestor is Abraham (sws) who left their nation by uttering these historic words: (إِنِّي بَرَاءٌ مِّمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ (٤٣:٢٦) (I am acquitted of the things which you worship, (43:26)) and settled his son Ishmael in Makkah. This declaration of migration persisted as a sacred tradition among his progeny. So how can these Idolaters claim that they have inherited Idolatry from their forefathers.

Verses (29-45): The real reason of the rebelliousness of the rejecters is referred to: the arguments they are trying to concoct to support their ignorance are baseless. The real thing which has become a source of trial for them is their affluence even though this affluence cannot tilt the scales of God's balance. The real success is that of the Hereafter, and they are showing indifference to it. Satan has blindfolded them, and this blindfold will be unfastened from them when it is of no use. The Prophet (sws) is then directed to hold fast to his preaching efforts. The Almighty will make him observe their fate in his lifetime or they will meet it after he passes away. The religion which the Prophet (sws) is calling them to is this very true religion; all prophets of God bear evidence to it.

Verses (46-65): The preaching of Moses (sws) and Jesus (sws) – two prophets of God is referred to: they too called people to this very *tawhīd*. Moses (sws) showed great signs one after the other to the Pharaoh and his chiefs. However, no sign could convince them. The reason for their denial was the same as that of these arrogant chiefs of the Quraysh. At last, they met the fate they deserved. These chiefs too will reach the

same fate.

Jesus (sws) too called people to this very *tawhīd*. As soon as they hear his name, the pugnacious among the Quraysh are propelled to argue with the Prophet (sws). They contend that their own deities are better than Jesus (sws). In other words, they think that the Qur'ān is mentioning the good name of Jesus (sws) so that like the Christians people regard him to be the son of God. The fact of the matter is that the Qur'ān is not presenting Jesus (sws) as the son of God; it is presenting him because he had invited people to the religion of God by the words: (۶۴: ۴۳) *إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ رَبِّي فَأَعْبُدْهُ وَرَبُّكُمْ* (God alone is my Lord and He alone is your Lord too; so serve Him only, (43;64)). Differences were created in this true call of Jesus (sws) by later generations, and they will soon meet their fate.

Verses (66-89): In these closing verses of the *sūrah*, first the fate of those people is mentioned who will profess faith in this true call; then the fate of those people is depicted who will deny it. In the end, the Prophet (sws) is assured that he should ignore these stubborn people. They will observe themselves the fate they will meet, and the actual reality behind intercession of the angels on the basis which they are showing conceit will also come before them.

Readers can take a look at this analysis of the *sūrah's* meanings and see how each part of it is deeply related to its central theme. They may also see that from the beginning to the end the whole *sūrah* is a harmonious whole. We now begin the *tafsīr* of the *sūrah*. It is only God who gives us the urge to do so.

Section I: Verses (1:25)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

حم (۱) وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ (۲) إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (۳) وَإِنَّهُ فِي أُمِّ الْكِتَابِ لَدَيْنَا لَعَلِيَّ حَكِيمٌ (۴) أَفَنَضْرِبُ عَنْكُمُ الذِّكْرَ صَفْحًا أَنْ كُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا مُسْرِفِينَ (۵) وَكَمْ أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ نَبِيِّ فِي الْأَوَّلِينَ (۶) وَمَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ نَبِيٍّ إِلَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِؤُونَ (۷) فَأَهْلَكْنَا أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ بَطْشًا وَمَضَى مَثَلُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (۸) وَلَئِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ لَيَقُولُنَّ خَلَقَهُنَّ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَلِيمُ (۹) الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ مَهْدًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ فِيهَا سُبُلًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ (۱۰) وَالَّذِي نَزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً بِقَدَرٍ فَأَنْشَرْنَا بِهِ بَلْدَةً مَيِّتًا كَذَلِكَ نُخْرِجُكُمْ (۱۱) وَالَّذِي خَلَقَ الْأَزْوَاجَ كُلَّهَا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ الْفُلْكِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ مَا

تَرْكَبُونَ (١٢) لِنَسْتَوْفُوا عَلَى ظُهورِهِ ثُمَّ تَذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ رَبِّكُمْ إِذَا اسْتَوَيْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ وَتَقُولُوا سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَنَا هَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لَهُ مُقْرِنِينَ (١٣) وَإِنَّا إِلَى رَبِّنَا لَمُنْقَلِبُونَ (١٤) وَجَعَلُوا لَهُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ جُزْءًا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَكَفُورٌ مُبِينٌ (١٥) أَمْ اتَّخَذَ مِمَّا يَخْلُقُ بَنَاتٍ وَأَصْفَاكُمْ بِالْبَنِينَ (١٦) وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُمْ بِمَا صَرَبَ لِلرَّحْمَنِ مَثَلًا ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ (١٧) أَوْ مَنْ يَنْشَأُ فِي الْحُلِيِّ وَهُوَ فِي الْخِصَامِ غَيْرُ مُبِينٍ (١٨) وَجَعَلُوا الْمَلَائِكَةَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ إِنَاثًا أَشْهَدُوا خَلْقَهُمْ سَتُكْتَبُ شَهَادَتُهُمْ وَيُسْأَلُونَ (١٩) وَقَالُوا لَوْ شَاءَ الرَّحْمَنُ مَا عَبَدْنَاهُمْ مَّا لَهُمْ بِذَلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ (٢٠) أَمْ آتَيْنَاهُمْ كِتَابًا مِّن قَبْلِهِ فَهُمْ بِهِ مُسْتَمْسِكُونَ (٢١) بَلْ قَالُوا إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَى أُمَّةٍ وَإِنَّا عَلَى آثَارِهِم مُّهْتَدُونَ (٢٢) وَكَذَلِكَ مَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِن قَبْلِكَ فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّن نَّذِيرٍ إِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوهَا إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَى أُمَّةٍ وَإِنَّا عَلَى آثَارِهِم مُّقْتَدُونَ (٢٣) قَالَ أُولُو جِثَّتِكُمْ بَأْهَدَى مِمَّا وَجَدْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَكُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ كَافِرُونَ (٢٤) فَانْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكْذِبِينَ (٢٥)

Hamīm. The clear book bears evidence. We have revealed it as an Arabic Qur'ān so that you may understand. And indeed, it is with Us in the Real Book, the exalted and full of wisdom. (1-4)

Should We ignore reminding you only because you are a people who transgress bounds. And how many a prophet did We send forth to the earlier peoples. And whichever prophet came to them, they would make only fun of him. So We destroyed those more mightier than them, and examples of previous peoples have passed. (5-8)

If you ask them: "Who created the heavens and the earth, they will definitely say: 'The powerful and knowing God created them.'" (9)

Who made this earth a cradle for you and made paths in it so that you find your way. And Who sent down water from the heavens in a certain measure. Thus We revived through it a dead land. In a similar manner, shall you be taken out of your graves. And Who created all kinds of things and made ships and beasts for you on which you ride so that you sit firm on their backs. Then you recall in mind the favour of the Almighty when you sit on them and say: "Glory be to Him Who put these things to our service and We would not have been able to subject them to our control. And, indeed, to God shall we return. (10-14)

And these people assign a part of their servants to Him. Indeed, man is an open ingrate. Did He choose daughters for Himself from His creations and gave you sons. And when any of them is given glad tidings of that

which He regards as an attribute of God, His face darkens and He remains depressed that is she born who is reared among trinkets and is not able to converse in expressing superiority. (15-18)

And they regard the angels who are the servants of the Most Gracious to be daughters. Were they present at their birth? This testimony of theirs has been noted, and they shall be questioned. (19)

And they say: "Had God willed, we would never have worshipped them." They have no knowledge in this; they are only wildly guessing. Have We given them a scripture before this so that they derive an argument from it. In fact, they say: "We found our ancestors on a practice and we are merely walking in their footsteps." And in this manner, whenever We sent a warner to a settlement, its affluence people remarked: "We have found our ancestors on a practice and We shall keep following their footsteps." The warner said: "What if I bring to you something which gives more guidance than what you found your ancestors on, will you still follow them?" They replied: "We reject everything with which you have been sent." So We took revenge from them; then see what fate those who disbelieved met. (20-25)

Explanation

¹حم (١)

Like the previous *sūrahs*, the Qur'ānic name of this *sūrah* too is *ḥamim*. I have already alluded to the fact that a similarity in name of *sūrahs* points to a similarity in the topics they discuss. Thus all the *ḥawamīm* which readers have been studying stand for the same the topic. The difference is only of style, nature of arguments and of conciseness and comprehensiveness.

²وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ (٢)

Here an oath is sworn by the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān is qualified by the attribute *مُبِينٌ*. The whole expression would mean that the Qur'ān is a book which explains. In other words, it presents a testimony on every claim it presents and does not require an external argument to do so. People who are trying to find excuses to deny it are only befooling their own selves.

Here the complement of oath is suppressed. Wherever there is evident indication for this suppression and the oath itself explains its complement, at such places, the complement is suppressed. There are

1. Ha mim.

2. The clear book bears evidence.

many examples of such suppression in the Qur'ān. A very clear precedent is found in Sūrah Qāf. Here the word مُبِينٌ points to the complement of oath. Hence there is no need to mention it separately. In other words, the obvious does not require any proof of its existence.

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (٣)³

This is a reference to a particular aspect of the Qur'ān being an explanatory book: God has revealed the Qur'ān as an Arabic Book so that its immediate addressees may understand it. This topic is brought up in various styles in the previous *sūrahs* of this group as well, and I have explained that the revelation of the Qur'ān in Arabic was a great favour to the Arabs, and also a means of the final conclusive communication of the truth to them. It is very evident how it is a favour to them: God had revealed His final and complete guidance to them in their own language so that they could be enlightened by it directly without any external help and as such are not indebted to others for receiving guidance; and in fact others are indebted to them in this matter. It is a means of the final conclusive communication of the truth to them because God had revealed this guidance in their own language thus leaving them with no excuse to escape from its dictates. They cannot present this excuse that the addressees are Arabs and the book revealed to them is not in Arabic.

وَإِنَّهُ فِي أُمِّ الْكِتَابِ لَدَيْنَا لَعَلِّي حَكِيمٌ (٤)⁴

This verse points to the exaltedness of the Qur'ān that it is not a jest or joke; on the contrary, it occupies a very regal and exalted status. Its regal status is explained by the fact that the book is found in the أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ or the guarded tablet which lies with God, and it is revealed from there for their guidance. The implication is that no one should try to make fun of it by regarding it to be an inspiration from the jinn, soothsaying of the soothsayers, poetry of poets or orations of orators. The fact of the matter is that this light has been revealed from the fountainhead of light with whose radiance the heavens and the earth are lit up, and Who is the actual fountainhead of all knowledge. Unfortunate are the people who do not value it.

Its exalted status is alluded to by the words لَعَلِّي حَكِيمٌ. The Qur'ān in itself is very superior and full of wisdom. It may be recalled that exactly

3. We have revealed it as an Arabic Qur'ān so that you may understand.

4. And indeed, it is with Us in the Real Book, the exalted and full of wisdom.

these very attributes have been mentioned for the Almighty in verse fifty one of the previous *sūrah*, and is mentioned while the Qur'ān and divine revelation was being discussed. It is obvious that every discourse is the reflection of its author. Since God is عَلِيَّ حَكِيمٌ hence His words are also عَلِيَّ حَكِيمٌ. It is evident from this that those who have the ability to value great and subtle things will be able to value this discourse; as far as dunces and thick-headed people are concerned, they are neither worthy of this discourse nor will they value it.

Another purpose of referring to the exalted status of the Qur'ān is to direct the attention of its opponents to the fact that it is the word of the creator of the heavens and the earth, and not the pleading of a pleader. If they do not value it, they will only deprive themselves, and will not harm God or His word in any way. Their superiority and exaltedness is an independent trait of theirs and is not related to the acceptance or rejection of their addressees.

أَفَنَضْرِبُ عَنْكُمُ الذِّكْرَ صَفْحًا أَنْ كُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا مُسْرِفِينَ (٥)⁵

The implication of this verse is that even though these people are ungrateful and are insulting and rejecting this exalted discourse, and are not prepared to reform the evils they have done by wronging their souls by being incriminated with polytheism and disbelief, this does not mean that they should have been left to themselves or should now be left to themselves and that they not be fully informed of the devastating consequences of their maladies. This situation of theirs demands that they be cured of these maladies instead of being ignored. Thus to remind and to teach them, the Almighty revealed a Book to them. Whether they value it or not, this reminder will be sounded to them until the truth is conclusively conveyed to them so that those who want to adopt the path that will lead them to life are provided with the opportunity to do so with full vision, and those who want to adopt the path that will lead them to destruction do so after this conclusive communication of the truth. This reminder and admonition of these people is taking place according to an established practice of God. With however much hate and arrogance they may reject this, it is bound to reach its culmination.

The word صَفْحًا, in my opinion connotes an accusative of cause (*maf'ūl lahū*) and means “to ignore something”. The expression ضَرْبُ عَنْهُ الشَّيْءِ would mean: “removal of something from someone”. The words أَنْ كُنْتُمْ

5. Should We ignore reminding you only because you are a people who transgress bounds.

قَوْمًا مُّسْرِفِينَ state the their real malady, and word مُّسْرِفِينَ actually denotes أَسْرَفُوا عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ (wronging their souls). The greatest wrong one can inflict on one's soul is becoming incriminated with polytheism. In other words, what is implied here is that when they are inflicted with the filth of disbelief and polytheism, how was it possible that the Almighty not show compassion to them. The people who are actually worthy of medicine are the sick whether they value it or not. If they value it, it will be only for their own good and if they do not do so, they will only invite their doom.

وَكَمْ أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ نَبِيِّ فِي الْأَوَّلِينَ (٦) وَمَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ نَبِيٍّ إِلَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ (٧)
فَأَهْلَكْنَا أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ بَطْشًا وَمَضَى مَثَلُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (٨)^٦

These verses reinforce what is said earlier through history, and are addressed to the Prophet (sws) to comfort him. He is told that the behaviour his opponents have adopted with him is no different from the one which was adopted by the nations of the previous messengers; the Almighty sent many messengers before him to remind and reform people, but each nation made fun of its messenger and showed disrespect to its advice; finally, the Almighty routed these nations and they were not at all less powerful and mighty than the Quraysh; in fact, they were much more, but the wrath of God broke their backs.

The words وَمَضَى مَثَلُ الْأَوَّلِينَ refer to the fact that examples of this practice of God can be seen in history. The reference is to the nations of 'Ād, Thamūd and to ones whose destruction has been mentioned in previous *sūrahs* and is also coming up in succeeding ones.

وَلَئِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ لَيَقُولُنَّ خَلَقَهُنَّ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَلِيمُ (٩)^٧

This verse mentions the details of the stubbornness and haughtiness of the Qur'ān which has been mentioned in verse five earlier. This mention will continue quite till quite further ahead. These people are willing to fight the Prophet (sws) to defend their religion of disbelief and polytheism, but the fact of the matter is that they themselves are in a state of discrepancy in their thoughts to which their aggression in opposition is not

6. And how many a prophet did We send forth to the earlier peoples. And whichever prophet came to them, they would make only fun of him. So We destroyed those more mightier than them, and examples of previous peoples have passed.

7. If you ask them: "Who created the heavens and the earth, they will definitely say: 'The powerful and knowing God created them.'"

letting them direct their attention to. If they are asked about the creator of the heavens and the earth, they will definitely answer that God, the powerful and knowledgeable is their creator; however, on the other hand, such is the extent of their foolishness that in the words of the Qur'ān: (وَجَعَلُوا لَهُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ جُزْءًا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَكَفُورٌ مُبِينٌ (٤٣: ١٥) (and these people assign a part of their servants to Him, 43:15). It may be kept in consideration that the Idolaters of Arabia regarded God to be the Creator of the heavens and the earth and of all other creatures, as has been mentioned in detail in previous *sūrahs*. However, on the other hand, they also believed that the angels are the daughters of God who are very near to Him and share His being and attributes and for this reason worshipping them would take them closer to God and grant them more children and opulence.

الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ مَهْدًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ فِيهَا سُبُلًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ (١٠)⁸

This verse and the succeeding three are not part of the speech of the Idolaters. They are insertions from God. The purpose is to show that any person who reflects deeply on the way this universe has been created, will find in it such signs of God's power, providence and wisdom that he will definitely acknowledge His oneness and also the coming of a Day of reward and punishment. The purpose of this detail is to show that the confession of the Idolaters that God, the all powerful and all knowing is that the creator of the heavens and the earth, if extrapolated in the right direction would entail the implications mentioned in this insertion from God. But the Idolaters after taking the first step in the right direction take a wrong turn as a result of which they bring to nothing a belief they acknowledge and thus lose their way.

The verse says that it is the all powerful and all knowing God Who has created the heavens and the earth (and whom they also acknowledge as the creator). In order to nurture and sustain them, He has made this earth a cradle. The aspect of making the earth a cradle is further explained by the Qur'ān at another place by saying that with His great power and wisdom God has set forth on it mountains so that the earth does not tumble away with them and also placed in them paths and ways. In other words, if God set forth mountains on the earth to balance it, then this was not done in a manner to hinder their access to various places; He placed trails and routes between these mountains both in the land and in the sea so that their caravans and ships are able to travel from one country to another.

8. Who made this earth a cradle for you and made paths in it so that you find your way.

The words لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ are very meaningful and subtle. One meaning of this expression is that the paths and routes are placed by the Almighty in between the towering mountains so that people do not get trapped behind such gigantic walls and are able to go beyond them. Another subtle reference which can be derived from this expression is that people should reflect on the power, wisdom, providence and the tremendous favours He has blessed them with and reach the conclusion that it is only the Lord Who has made such elaborate arrangements for them Who is worthy of being shown gratitude to and worshipped and obeyed and if they do not recognize this right of His, there will come day in which they will be held answerable for their ingratitude.

وَالَّذِي نَزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً بِقَدَرٍ فَأَنْشَرْنَا بِهِ بَلْدَةً مَّيِّتًا كَذَلِكَ تُخْرَجُونَ⁹

And one of the majesties of the all-knowing and all-powerful Lord is that He sent down rain in a particular measure. This sending down of water in a specific amount is a very obvious evidence to the fact that it is not merely produced by the interaction of clouds and winds but as per the verdict of the all-knowing and all-mighty Lord Who in accordance with His wisdom sends down only that amount of rain which can be tolerated by the earth. From this, another deduction that can be made is that in the heavens and the earth the will and intention of one all-knowing and all-mighty Lord prevails. Had this not been the case, how could such harmony have existed between the heavens and the earth that water should descend from the heavens and the earth use it to nurture its potentials. It is further evident from this that the all-knowing and all-powerful Lord is very noble and gracious because He sends down water in a measured amount only. With this measure is related all the blessings of this earth. If some disorder comes about in this, this earth can be destroyed both because of a shortage of water and because of its abundance.

The words فَأَنْشَرْنَا بِهِ بَلْدَةً مَّيِّتًا كَذَلِكَ تُخْرَجُونَ direct attention to a special aspect of rain and since this aspect reveals a very great reality of this world, hence it is mentioned in the first person which is used to express great elaboration. The words state that the Almighty revives a dead and a desolate piece of land through this water and it becomes lush green. In a similar manner, man too will rise from this earth after dying and decaying into it.

9. And Who sent down water from the heavens in a certain measure. Thus We revived through it a dead land. In a similar manner, shall you be taken out of your graves.

وَالَّذِي خَلَقَ الْأَزْوَاجَ كُلَّهَا وَجَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنَ الْفُلْكِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ مَا تَرْكَبُونَ (١٢) لِيَسْتَوُوا عَلَى ظُهُورِهِ ثُمَّ تَذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ رَبِّكُمْ إِذَا اسْتَوَيْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ وَتَقُولُوا سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَنَا هَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لَهُ مُقْرِنِينَ (١٣) وَإِنَّا إِلَى رَبِّنَا لَمُنْقَلِبُونَ (١٤)¹⁰

After mentioning some signs of the providence of the all-knowing and all-powerful God, attention is directed to what they entail – something which every right-natured person should feel and comprehend who is benefiting from them.

The verse says that it is God Who has created these multifarious things. The word أَزْوَاجٌ mere means “multifarious” and “diverse”. It is used in this meaning abundantly in the Qur’ān and classical Arabic literature. Thus, for example, in the expression (٧ : ٥٠) مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ بَهِيجٍ, it is used in this very meaning. Things have been created in variety and in pairs in this world so that man is reminded of the power, wisdom, mercy and providence of the Creator of this world. The arguments adduced by the Qur’ān on monotheism by referring to the harmony found in the individual members of pairs has been explained at the relevant places of this *tafsīr*.

The words وَجَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنَ الْفُلْكِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ مَا تَرْكَبُونَ mention two specific things after mentioning the general: it is God Who has produced boats and beasts for man as means of transport. At the time of revelation of the Qur’ān, these two means of land and sea transport were very common; hence they have been mentioned. Now, because of advancement of science, many other means of transport have been added to this list but all of them can be subsumed under these two because the science with the help of which man has invented them is a gift of God.

The words لِيَسْتَوُوا عَلَى ظُهُورِهِ ثُمَّ تَذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ رَبِّكُمْ إِذَا اسْتَوَيْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ وَتَقُولُوا سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَنَا هَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لَهُ مُقْرِنِينَ mention the obligation towards these favours of God: God has made these means of transport for man so that he can benefit from them and recognize the right of He Who has granted them these favours; when they board these means of transport, they should remember the blessing of God that He bestowed these favours on them even though they are not entitled to them; hence, it is

10. And Who created all kinds of things and made ships and beasts for you on which you ride so that you sit firm on their backs. Then you recall in mind the favour of the Almighty when you sit on them and say: “Glory be to Him Who put these things to our service and We would not have been able to subject them to our control. And, indeed, to God shall we return.

not worthy of them to sit on these conveyances and show conceit; at the time of embarking them, they should pray to God: “Glory be to Him Who put these things in our service and We would not have been able to subject them to our control.”

In the expression *لَتَسْتَوُوا عَلَى ظُهُورِهِ*, though the word *ظُهُورٌ* is not appropriate for boats and collocates more with horses and other animals used for transport, here it is used in the general sense while keeping in view the dominant element. Such usage is common in Arabic. The objective is to point out that whether a person boards a boat or rides a horse, instead of showing conceit, a person should express his gratitude to God. However, horses have been specially mentioned here to warn people that when a rider of a horse passes by a pedestrian, the flames of superiority and conceit ignite in him more so when he has a petty nature – so much so, like the horse, a person’s neck stiffens as well. This element has greatly increased in current times with the advent of motor vehicles. There are very few fortunate people who sit decently in cars; their arrogance is evident from every action they make and is evident in such a despicable way that it becomes difficult to make out whether he is a human being or some other creature.

In the words *سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَنَا هَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لَهُ مُقْرِنِينَ*, the word *سُبْحَانَ* is meant to connote the exaltedness of God: He is free from all traces of polytheism and is without any blemish – small or great. Such exaltedness inspires trust and reliance on God, and it is this sentiment which protects a person from conceit, arrogance and misconduct and engenders in him the feelings of gratitude, humility and modesty.

The word *إِقرَان* means to get the better of one’s opponent and to make him submit. The implication is that at that time a person with full humility should confess to His Lord that it is the blessing and graciousness of God because of which this means of transport has been brought under his control otherwise it would not have been possible for him to do so by himself.

It should be kept in mind that this confession and acknowledgement is the acknowledgment of a reality. All things of this world which have been put to our service are under God’s authority – without which a person’s own plan or strategy cannot make the smallest of things submit to him. Man can harness a camel and a horse through briddles but can he subdue wild beasts and put them to his service. For example, he cannot dare use the lion as a means of transport. It is only God’s graciousness that He has created so many animals to serve us, and given us the ability to bring them under our control and use them for various purposes. In recent

times, man has been able to bring into his control steam, electricity and the atom because God has given him the ability to do so. These conquests have made man very arrogant and he now regards himself to be the owner of every object of this world. The fact of the matter is that whenever God wants, He can liberate these things from man's control and turn them into a means of torment for him instead of mercy.

The supplication which is taught here outwardly relates to the means of transport run by camels and horses; however, this supplication is also appropriate for other developed means of conveyance of these times, for example, cars and aeroplanes etc. However, for sea transport, the Qur'ānic supplication which is more appropriate is the one which is ascribed to Noah (sws) viz. (١١: ٤١) بِسْمِ اللَّهِ جَرَّاهَا وَمُرْسَاهَا إِنَّ رَبِّي لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (by the name of God is its departing and halting; indeed my Lord is forgiving and merciful, (11:41)).

وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ: Just as earlier on, the words وَإِنَّا إِلَى رَبِّنَا لَمُنْقَلِبُونَ are very meaningful, similarly, here these words are very subtle, meaningful and shed light on a very important aspect of philosophy of religion: while boarding a conveyance, a person should not merely keep in mind that he is going from a certain city to another; he should also bear in mind the fact that one day he will be definitely returning to God and come to His presence. The occasion of this reminder is that every favour is a testimony to God being the sustainer, and this in turn necessitates that the Lord one day gather everyone and hold them accountable for the favours He gave them and then duly reward those who used them in the right manner and take revenge from those who made these favours a means of their rebelliousness and transgression. This accountability and reward and punishment is a necessary outcome of God's providence. In short, these words present a beautiful example of the discourse shifting from one reality to another. Scores of such examples can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*.

وَجَعَلُوا لَهُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ جُزْءًا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَكَفُورٌ مُبِينٌ (١٥)

This verse is connected to verse nine above. After verse nine verses of insertion (*taḍmīn*) from God had begun and thus no comment was made on the contradictions which the confessors had in their views. Now this verse is a comment on these contradictions. In other words, the complete

11. And these people assign a part of their servants to Him. Indeed, man is an open ingrate.

sense would be that on the one hand is the confession of these people that God only is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and on the other hand they have made some servants of God His part ie made His partners. This belief of theirs is against what they acknowledge. If God is the creator of all the heaven and the earth and all that is between them, then everything is His creation; so how can anything be a part of Him? To be a part of Him would mean that something has originated from His being and then as a necessary consequence also be His peer and equal. After affirming this, how can God be regarded as one and alone. Here it needs to be kept in mind that there were some deities of the Idolaters which they regarded to be partners of God in His attributes and rights and others who were His partners in His being. For example, they regarded the angels to be favoured daughters of God; worshipping them would become a means of their intercession and their own salvation. Here the Qur'ān has refuted this claim of theirs that everything other than God is His creation. Nothing has the status of being His part. It is man's utter ungratefulness that he has got everything from God alone yet he makes other his deities and sings their praises and worships them.

A little deliberation will show that this verse refutes the belief of *wahdah al-wujūd* whose real originators are Hindu philosophers but a group of our sufis are guilty of introducing it into Islam. As a result of this belief, everything of this universe assumes to be a part of God. So if making angels to be part of God is polytheism, how can regarding all the universe to be part of God be regarded as monotheism.

أَمْ اتَّخَذَ مِمَّا يَخْلُقُ بَنَاتٍ وَأَصْفَاكُمْ بِالْبَنِينَ (١٦) وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُمْ بِمَا ضَرَبَ لِلرَّحْمَنِ مَثَلًا ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ¹²

The word *أَمْ* connotes disgust and amazement. The belief of the Idolaters of Arabia regarding angels as daughters of God is criticized here from another angle. The previous verse refuted them to be part of God. In this verse, the baseless nature of this belief is explicated through a psychological aspect: it is not merely unfair that they regard His own creation to be His part, even more unfair is the fact that they regard daughters to be very detestable but feel no shame in ascribing them to God. Some one should ask them if it is only God Who creates everyone, why would He favour daughters for Himself when their own situation is

12. Did He choose daughters for Himself from His creations and gave you sons. And when any of them is given glad tidings of that which He regards as an attribute of God, His face darkens and He remains depressed

that when any of them is given the news of a daughter's birth, his face turns bleak and he becomes very anxious.

The implication is that not only have they not used sense and reason to fabricate this belief, they have also belied the sense of decency which is an obvious requirement of human nature. If they are not able to understand the fact that God has no partners, they should at least have been just enough to not ascribe something to God which they themselves hate and detest. By inventing this belief, they have not only humiliated sense and reason, but also shown their disregard of the sense of justice.

أَوْ مَنْ يُنشَأُ فِي الْحِلْيَةِ وَهُوَ فِي الْخِصَامِ غَيْرُ مُبِينٍ (١٨)¹³

This is an expression of the feelings which arise in them upon hearing the news of a daughter's birth and make them feel clogged-up. The verse says that they start thinking that has she come into being who grows up around adornments and is absolutely speechless in areas of expressing superiority.

The word *خِصَامٍ* encompasses both *mubārazat* (challenging a soldier for a solo fight before a battle) and *mufākharat* (expressing superiority over others) and Arabs of the *jāhiliyyah* period were fond of both. Every now and then wars would erupt between them and competitions would also be held in which the orators and poets of each tribe would express superiority and pre-eminence and try to outdo each other in this. Obviously, women were inferior in both these areas. Neither would she take part in battles by wearing armor and carrying weapons nor was she of any stature in poetry and oratory. For this reason, she was of little importance in the eyes of the Arabs, and this is not merely specific to the Arabs only. In these times too, the importance women have gained relates much to gatherings where showing off and embellishments are important. As far *mubārazat* and *mufākharat* are concerned, she is still at the same level as she was in Arab *jāhiliyyah*. Here, it should be kept in mind that this comment on women is not from God; it is from the people of Arabia who would regard angels to be the daughters of God. Our exegetes generally regard this to be a comment from God. This misunderstanding has arisen because people have not reflected on the context of the discourse.

13. that is she born who is reared among trinkets and is not able to converse in expressing superiority.

وَجَعَلُوا الْمَلَائِكَةَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ إِنَاثًا أَشْهَدُوا خَلَقَهُمْ سَتُكْتَبُ شَهَادَتُهُمْ
وَيُسْأَلُونَ (١٩)¹⁴

Their notion under discussion is refuted from another angle. They are asked: What is their basis of regarding these angels as women? Were they present when the Almighty created the angels? After this, they are threatened in a very stern manner that this claim of theirs shall be noted down and one day they will be asked about it. This whole discussion about the angels was also discussed in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Ṣāffāt earlier. Those who would like to know more details may look it up.

وَقَالُوا لَوْ شَاءَ الرَّحْمَنُ مَا عَبَدْنَاهُمْ مَا لَهُمْ بِذَلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ (٢٠) أَمْ
آتَيْنَاهُمْ كِتَابًا مِّن قَبْلِهِ فَهُمْ بِهِ مُسْتَمْسِكُونَ (٢١)¹⁵

The religious argument which the Idolaters would put forth in support of this foolish concept of theirs is cited here. They contended that their mere worshipping them shows that God likes this worship. Had the Almighty not liked this, He has power over everything; He could have stopped them and they would have not been able to worship them. In response to this, the Qur'ān says that this is mere speculative talk; they have no knowledge of this matter. It is not the right way to gauge the liking of God by seeing how much respite a person or a group has been given to do some evil. If this is an argument, then it can be presented in favour in fact praise by every thief, adulterer and ruffian for his theft and hooliganism, and he can say that had this been against the will of God, He would have forcibly stopped them; since He has not stopped them from it, then it only means that whatever they are doing is liked by Him.

The words state the reliable way of knowing the likes and dislikes of God is His Books and the teaching of His prophets. So has God given them a Book prior to the Qur'ān which they can present in their support? If this is not so and obviously cannot be so, then on what authority do they claim that what they are doing has God's permission.

14. And they regard the angels who are the servants of the Most Gracious to be daughters. Were they present at their birth? This testimony of theirs has been noted, and they shall be questioned.

15. And they say: "Had God willed, we would never have worshipped them." They have no knowledge in this; they are only wildly guessing. Have We given them a scripture before this so that they derive an argument from it.

بَلْ قَالُوا إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم مُّقْتَدُونَ (٢٢)¹⁶

Earlier, a religious argument of the Idolaters was refuted. A deliberation on it will reveal that the Idolaters were deceived in the same manner as the fatalists of today. Cited in this verse is their traditional argument on which they relied the most. Since this argument is based on blind following one's ancestors which relates to emotions instead of intellect, so the miscreants of every period have used this weapon to their advantage and by inciting the emotions of the masses have tried to stop the reformatory efforts of the reformers.

The word أُمَّة means the collective behaviour or mannerism of a community, as has been explained at an appropriate place. The verse states that these people bring forth the argument in their favour that they found their ancestors on a right viewpoint and on a superior way, and would contend that since they are followers of their viewpoint, they are rightly guided and following their ancestors would guarantee they being rightly guided; if they deviate from their path even slightly, then they would deviate from the path of guidance; hence people who are trying to make them deviate from this path are only after their ruin.

It needs to be kept in mind that the word أُمَّة occurs as an indefinite noun to connote its majesty and grandeur.

وَكَذَٰلِكَ مَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّنْ نَّذِيرٍ إِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوهَا إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم مُّقْتَدُونَ (٢٣) قَالَ أُولَٰؤُا حِجَّتُكُمْ بِأَهْدَىٰ مِمَّا وَجَدْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَكُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ كَافِرُونَ (٢٤)¹⁷

The verse says that just as these people are blind followers in the matter of their religion, similarly, they are blind followers of the rejecters of the previous prophets in the matter of reasoning. Before Muḥammad (sws) whichever warner was sent to a nation, the arrogant among them responded to his calls of warning and reformation by saying that they

16. In fact, they say: "We found our ancestors on a practice and we are merely walking in their footsteps."

17. And, in this manner, whenever We sent a warner to a settlement, its affluence people remarked: "We have found our ancestors on a practice and We shall keep following their footsteps." The warner said: "What if I bring to you something which gives more guidance than what you found your ancestors on, will you still follow them?" They replied: "We reject everything with which you have been sent."

found their forefathers on a specific viewpoint and that they shall remain strong adherents to their viewpoint. When that messenger asked them whether they will still remain so if he brings a better alternative to them. In response, they angrily said that they are rejecters of all that he has brought.

Two things become evident from the words: *إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ كَافِرُونَ*.

One, they said these words annoyingly and in desperation. This is because the answer is way ahead of the question. The question posed by the messenger was that if the viewpoint to which he is calling them to is better than the one they found their forefathers on, will they still cling to it in stubbornness. In reply, they said that they are rejecters of all what he says. In other words, the issue is not concerning what is the guided path or not, they are not ready to even listen and accept what he is telling them.

Two, the ability to distinguish between guidance and misguidance has been innately endowed by the Almighty in man on the condition that man has a conscience which is alive; he is not stubborn, arrogance and obdurate.

*فَانْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَأَنْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ (٢٥)*¹⁸

The verse implies that when the stubbornness and arrogance of nations reached the limit that they refused to listen and accept the calls of the messengers, the Almighty sought revenge from them for this ungrateful attitude. Then it should be seen what fate the rejecters of the messengers met.

Section II: Verses (26-45)

The succeeding verses mention the migration and declaration of acquittal of Abraham (sws) from polytheism. The purpose is to express the fact that absolutely baseless is the claim of the Quraysh that the religion of polytheism which they are following has been inherited by them from their forefathers. The fact of the matter is that their real ancestor is Abraham (sws) who left his people because of polytheism and tradition of his migration and of his declaration of acquittal is found even today in both branches of its progeny. Then on what basis are the Quraysh saying that they are following the path of their ancestors.

After referring to this historical fact the real reason of the rebelliousness of the Quraysh is highlighted and the Prophet (sws) is

18. So We took revenge from them; then see what fate those who disbelieved met.

assured that he should adhere to his preaching; the real way of the messengers is the one he is calling people to; if God wants, He can pass His verdict between the Prophet (sws) and his opponents, but according to His established practice He gives respite till a certain time to the enemies of the truth.

In the light of this background, readers may now proceed to study the verses:

Text and Translation

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ إِنَّنِي بَرَاءٌ مِّمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ (٢٦) إِلَّا الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي فَإِنَّهُ سَيَهْدِينِ (٢٧) وَجَعَلَهَا كَلِمَةً بَاقِيَةً فِي عَقِبِهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ (٢٨) بَلْ مَتَّعْتُ هَؤُلَاءِ وَآبَاءَهُمْ حَتَّىٰ جَاءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ وَرَسُولٌ مُّبِينٌ (٢٩) وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ قَالُوا هَذَا سِحْرٌ وَإِنَّا بِهِ كَافِرُونَ (٣٠) وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ عَلَىٰ رَجُلٍ مِّنَ الْقَرْيَتَيْنِ عَظِيمٍ (٣١) أَهُم يَفْسِمُونَ رَحْمَةَ رَبِّكَ نَحْنُ فَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ مَّعِيشَتَهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَرَفَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِّيَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضًا سَخِرِيًّا وَرَحِمَتْ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ (٣٢) وَلَوْلَا أَن يَكُونَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً لَّجَعَلْنَا لِمَن يَكْفُرُ بِالرَّحْمَنِ لِبُيُوتِهِمْ سُقْفًا مِّن فِصَّةٍ وَمَعَارِجَ عَلَيْهَا يَظْهَرُونَ (٣٣) وَلِبُيُوتِهِمْ أَبْوَابًا وَسُرَرًا عَلَيْهَا يَتَكَبَّرُونَ (٣٤) وَزُخْرَفًا وَإِنْ كُلُّ ذَلِكَ لَمَّا مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةُ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ (٣٥) وَمَن يَعِشْ عَن ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمَنِ نُقِيضْ لَهُ شَيْطَانًا فَهُوَ لَهُ قَرِينٌ (٣٦) وَإِنَّهُمْ لَيَصُدُّوهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُّهْتَدُونَ (٣٧) حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَنَا قَالَ يَا لَيْتَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكَ بُعْدَ الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ فَيَنبَسِ الْقَرِينُ (٣٨) وَلَن يَنفَعَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ إِذ ظَلَمْتُمْ أَنَّكُم فِي الْعَذَابِ مُشْتَرِكُونَ (٣٩) أَفَأَنْتَ تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ أَوْ تَهْدِي الْعُمْيَ وَمَن كَانَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (٤٠) فَإِنَّمَا نَذْهَبَنَّ بِكَ فَإِنَّا مِنْهُمْ مُنْتَقِمُونَ (٤١) أَوْ نُرِيَنَّكَ الَّذِي وَعَدْنَاهُمْ فَإِنَّا عَلَيْهِمْ مُّقْتَدِرُونَ (٤٢) فَاسْتَمْسِكْ بِالَّذِي أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (٤٣) وَإِنَّهُ لَذِكْرٌ لَّكَ وَلِقَوْمِكَ وَسَوْفَ تُسْأَلُونَ (٤٤) وَاسْأَلْ مَنْ أَرْسَلْنَا مِن قَبْلِكَ مِن رُّسُلِنَا أَجَعَلْنَا مِن دُونِ الرَّحْمَنِ آلِهَةً يُعْبَدُونَ (٤٥)

And recall when Abraham said to his father and to his people: "I renounce what you worship. I only worship Him Who created me. So, indeed, He alone will guide me." He left this as an abiding tradition among his descendants so that people may turn to it alone. (26-28)

In fact, what happened was that I granted them and their forefathers

worldly benefits until there came to them the truth and a messenger who explains. And when the truth came to them, they said: "This is sorcery and we reject it." (29-30)

And they objected: "Why was this Qur'ān not revealed to some prominent person of the two cities?" Is it they who apportion your Lord's blessings? We have allocated among them their livelihood in this world and have raised some in status above others so that they can mutually serve each other. And better is your Lord's mercy than what they are amassing. (31-32)

Had it not been for the fact that people might have adopted one path, We would have made the house roofs of those who have rejected the Most Gracious Lord of silver and their stairways also which they climb roofs, and also their doors and their couches on which they recline. And We could have made these into gold as well. And these things are only provisions of worldly life and the life to come is reserved by your Lord for the virtuous. (33-35).

And he who becomes indifferent to the remembrance of God, We depute a devil on him who becomes his companion. And they stop him from the path of God and they think that they are rightly guided. Until when he comes to Us, he will say: "Would that I and you were as far apart as both borders of the East." So what an evil companion he will be. And when you have wronged your souls, the thought that you will share the torment with one another will not benefit you the slightest. (36-39)

So will you make the deaf hear or guide the blind or those in open error? Thus either We will take you way and take revenge from them or let you see what We have promised them. Hence We have full power over them. Therefore hold fast to that which is revealed to you. Indeed, you are on a straight path. And this is a reminder for you and for your people and soon you all shall be questioned. And ask the messengers whom We sent before you: "Did we set up gods other than the merciful Lord to be worshipped."

Explanation

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ إِنَّنِي بَرَاءٌ مِّمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ (٢٦)¹⁹

The word بَرَاءٌ is a verbal noun used as an adjective. When a verbal noun is used as an adjective an element of exaggeration is incorporated in it. An example of this is زَيْدٌ عَدْلٌ (Zayd is justice). Thus the words: إِنَّنِي بَرَاءٌ would mean "I am totally absolved of you and there is no

19. And recall when Abraham said to his father and to his people: "I renounce what you worship.

relationship left between you and me.”

This is a reference to the declaration of acquittal made by Abraham (sws) and has been mentioned in detail in the previous *sūrahs*, and the purpose of its mention as I have referred to earlier is to make evident to the Quraysh the reality when they in support of their polytheism allude to their ancestors why do they forget their real ancestor who because of the very reason of detesting polytheism left his father and his people and took his progeny to a desolate and barren valley and settled them there. The implication is that if they are proud of the religion of their ancestors, then the greatest of their ancestors is Abraham (sws) because of whose blessings they were able to reap favours both in the corporal world and in their religion; so why did they adopt the ways of these ignorant while leaving aside the ways of Abraham (sws) – the ignorant who made them deviate from the religion of the real elder of the family and threw them in the abyss of polytheism.

This declaration of acquittal by Abraham (sws) was made foremost before his father as is evident from the words: وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ. In them, there is a warning to the Quraysh: if they contemplate they will realize that the real inheritance left by Abraham (sws) for them is not polytheism while blindly follow their forefathers; it is rather of abhorrence to his forefathers who were inflicted with polytheism.

إِلَّا الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي فَإِنَّهُ سَيَهْدِينِ (٢٧)²⁰

The exception mentioned in this sentence is from the words مِمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ. Just as the Idolaters of Arabia would worship God but would also impute partners to Him, in a similar manner, the nation of Abraham (sws) too did not disbelieve in God; it imputed partners to Him. Through this declaration, Abraham (sws) made it evident to his nation that the other deities they have set up with God are absolutely baseless and that he worships God and will do so in future because God is His creator and is thereby worthy of worship.

The words فَإِنَّهُ سَيَهْدِينِ relate to Abraham’s declaration of acquittal. Its implied meaning is that the declaration of acquittal he is making is a very difficult one; he is aware of its hardships but he is hopeful that the God for Whom he is undertaking such danger will guide him in these hardships.

20. I only worship Him Who created me. So, indeed, He alone will guide me.”

وَجَعَلَهَا كَلِمَةً بَاقِيَةً فِي عَقِبِهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ (٢٨)²¹

The antecedent of the accusative pronoun in جَعَلَهَا is the declaration of acquittal and migration which is mentioned earlier. The occurrence of such pronouns can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*.

The words كَلِمَةً بَاقِيَةً mean an abiding tradition. In other words, Abraham (sws) through his words, deeds and teachings implanted his declaration of acquittal as a firm tradition among his progeny. The predecessors would continue to urge and stress upon their successors to transfer it and keep it alive. In one of the branches of Abraham's progeny, the Israelites, it was kept alive through their scriptures and through the teachings and reminders of their prophets. Since in its other branch, the Ishmaelites, prophets were not sent, it became very weak; however, even in them, there remained a group who were the followers of the religion of Abraham (sws), bearers of his call to monotheism and custodians of his tradition of abhorrence towards polytheism.

The words لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ imply that this tradition was left among his progeny so that it continue to be a sign-post to them: whenever Satan tries to inveigle them or if they deviate from the right path, they can come back to it by observing the sign-post.

بَلْ مَتَّعْتُ هَؤُلَاءِ وَآبَاءَهُمْ حَتَّىٰ جَاءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ وَرَسُولٌ مُّبِينٌ (٢٩) وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ قَالُوا هَذَا سِحْرٌ وَإِنَّا بِهِ كَافِرُونَ (٣٠)²²

The word الْحَقُّ refers to the Qur'ān and after آبَاءَهُمْ words to the effect فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ are suppressed because of contextual indication. In Sūrah ḥadīd verse sixteen these words can be found in exactly the same context. Moreover, in verse forty four of Sūrah Anbiyā' also this topic is discussed in the following words: بَلْ مَتَّعْنَا هَؤُلَاءِ وَآبَاءَهُمْ حَتَّىٰ طَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ (٢١: ٤٤) (and We blessed them and their forefathers with the favours of this world till a great period of time passed on these circumstances, (21:44)).

The implication is that it is mere lame and frivolous talk on their part

21. He left this as an abiding tradition among his descendants so that people may turn to it alone.

22. In fact, what happened was that I granted them and their forefathers worldly benefits until there came to them the truth and a messenger who explains. And when the truth came to them, they said: "This is sorcery and we reject it."

that they are opposing the Qur'ān because it calls them to what is against the religion of their ancestors. The real reason of their opposition is that the Almighty blessed them and their forefathers with the favours of this world and a great amount of time has passed over this opulence which has hardened their hearts. Now that there has come to them the Qur'ān and a messenger who is revealing the reality to them, this message is weighing heavily on them. They think that accepting it would put their worldly interests into danger. For this reason they regard it to be sorcery in order to disillusion the masses from it.

There was a specific aspect of the Quraysh calling the Qur'ān as sorcery to which I have alluded at any appropriate place: if some reality becomes apparent in the right words it definitely effects the hearts. Since the Qur'ān is nothing but the truth as is evident from the word and its style is also inimitable, it naturally influences the hearts of people who are not selfish and who like the leaders of the Quraysh were not fearful of the fact that the appearance of this reality is a danger to their leadership. In order to stop such people from getting influenced by the Qur'ān, the Quraysh could not have said that the Qur'ān is a worthless and a meaningless book. If they had said so, their own masses would have regarded them to be foolish because this is sooraj par khak dalna. However, they would try to convince their masses that the eloquence and articulacy found in the Qur'ān is not because it is divine, as is the claim of its presenter; it is merely a magic of words in which its presenter is adept like their own poets and orators. In other words, they would try that people are not led to believe that the Qur'ān is a revelation from God but are led to believe that it is of the category of the composition of their poets and discourses of their orators.

وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ عَلَى رَجُلٍ مِّنَ الْقَرْيَتَيْنِ عَظِيمٍ (٣١)

In order to disillusion the masses from the Qur'ān and the Prophet (sws), these leaders of the Quraysh would also say that if this book has been revealed by God, then why is not sent down to some great chief of Makkah or Ṭā'if. The words مِّنَ الْقَرْيَتَيْنِ (of the two cities) refer to Makkah and Ṭā'if because it was these two cities who were the centre of the nobles and chiefs of the Arabs. For generations, they were the leaders and of the Arabs. Thus the simpletons could be easily led to believe that if God really wanted to reveal something to guide people, He would have revealed it to

23. And they objected: "Why was this Qur'ān not revealed to some prominent person of the two cities?"

the affluent person of these cities; leaving them aside, why would He choose a person who is not only poor, but the son of a poor person and the rich would seldom be prepared to even listen to what he has to say.

أَهُمْ يَقْسِمُونَ رَحْمَةَ رَبِّكَ نَحْنُ قَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ مَعِيشَتَهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَرَفَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ
فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِيَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضًا سُخْرِيًّا وَرَحِمْتَ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ (٣٢)²⁴

This verse is a response to the haughtiness of the arrogant leaders of the Quraysh: what they say shows that they have monopoly on all the favours of God, and they alone have the authority to a favour to someone they want and deprive anyone they want to from it. The fact of the matter is that the resources and riches the Quraysh have been blessed with is because of the distribution from God; they have not obtained them by themselves. If they had obtained them by themselves, then why would there exist a difference of level and status in between these rich; if a person has the authority, how can he be content on being less rich in some aspect than others. This difference in status – which is against their own desire – is a clear evidence to the fact that they are not the ones in whose hands lies this distribution; in fact, it is in the hands of someone else Who according to His discretion and wisdom gives more to whomsoever He wants to and gives less to whomsoever He wants to.

نُ فَلَانَا سُخْرِيًّا لِيَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضًا سُخْرِيًّا. The expression لِيَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضًا سُخْرِيًّا would mean that such and such a person put such and such a person into his service.

These words express the wisdom behind granting different levels to different people viz a viz their mental and material resources and abilities: in order that people spend a life of mutual co-operation and put one another in the service of one another.

It should remain evident here that the Almighty has made this world for trial and test. For this reason, He has created its system in such a manner that every person is dependent on another in some way. The greatest of kings is dependent on others and the humblest of people are needed by others. No one is self-sufficient and can live in absolute independence. Similarly, there is no one who does not have some utility in the society. A little deliberation shows that the Creator of the heavens and earth has not created everyone with the same abilities, equal intelligence, similar tastes and same status viz a viz their means and

24. Is it they who apportion your Lord's blessings? We have allocated among them their livelihood in this world and have raised some in status above others so that they can mutually serve each other. And better is your Lord's mercy than what they are amassing.

resources; on the contrary, there exists a great difference between people in these matters. This difference develops the society in such way that on the one hand there exist in a society brilliant scholars, famous writers, exceptional researchers, renowned thinkers and powerful rulers and on the other hand, we find workers who till the soil and labour in factories, porters who transport goods on their backs, vigilant servants and janitors who clean streets and canals. All these elements are essential in fact indispensable for the development of a society. All provide different types of services; none of them is less in importance than the other and none can be ignored either. In fact, in order that the machine of this society functions properly, it is essential to look after the smallest of its spare parts in proportion to the benefit it provides.

By creating this world such that people have different status and positions in it, the Almighty is testing how those who are more talented and resourceful are using their talents and resources. After benefiting from them, have been inflicted with arrogance, selfishness, forcibly imposing themselves on others and disobeying the Creator of the worlds or show gratefulness, obedience and sympathy to other creatures? Similarly, He is also judging those with less worldly means and resources whether they recognize their responsibilities in their spheres of life, fear their Creator and protect their self-esteem and honour or after being negligent of their duties are overcome with the evil notion of defeating those who are their rulers and superiors.

If the first of these situations arises, then because of the noble co-operation of high and the low, a noble society comes into being, and all its components without any distinction receive respect in this world and in the Hereafter too each will be rewarded in accordance with its services and purity of intention. If the second situation arises, then the system of the society gradually gives way to disorder and then finally annihilates, and in the Hereafter too, its small or big elements become worthy of God's wrath in proportion to their misconduct and negligence.

In these times, people who are inflicted with the craze of obliterating class differences in a society cannot succeed in their intent unless they are able to make people equal in their mental, temperamental, natural and practical abilities, and this is impossible. Nations who went on the rampage to achieve this aim also ended up in the situation that simultaneously with the arrogant powerful elements there existed in their society menial people who would polish their boots and sweep their streets. If they succeed in making this impossible as possible and thus are able to equalize the whole society viz a viz their abilities and mental and material resources, then the basis of mutual cooperation will finish and

anarchy will spread in the society. When every person will have in him the ability to become a Lenin or a Stalin why would he content himself in becoming Lenin's or Mao's driver or their servants who clean their shoes? Everyone would then like to become God and in the presence of so many gods who can imagine what will happen to this world.

وَلَوْلَا أَن يَكُونَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً لَجَعَلْنَا لِمَن يَكْفُرُ بِالرَّحْمَنِ لِبُيُوتِهِمْ سُقْفًا مِّن فِصَّةٍ
وَمَعَارِجَ عَلَيْهَا يَظْهَرُونَ (٣٣) وَلِبُيُوتِهِمْ أَبْوَابًا وَسُرُرًا عَلَيْهَا يَتَكَبَّرُونَ (٣٤)²⁵

Here just as the words سُقْفًا مِّن فِصَّةٍ occur after مَعَارِجَ and أَبْوَابًا and سُرُرًا. However, as per linguistic principles of eloquent Arabic they are suppressed because there is a strong indication of its presence.

Now in these verses, the lack of reality in worldly things is being made evident – things which had made the disbelievers so arrogant that they became infatuated with the notion that when they have all the majesty and power of this world, then how is it possible that God reveal a Book and reveal it to someone other than themselves.

These verses say that the resources and assets of life of which they are very proud have no reality in the eyes of God. Had it not been the case that people would adhere to the same view, the Almighty would have made the roofs, staircases, doors and sofas of silver but He did not do this because this would have made the trial very severe: when the masses would have seen that those who have disbelieved in God have so much, they too would have adopted the path of disbelief; the very fortunate may have been able to protect their faith. In order to shield the masses from this trial the Almighty has blessed the believers and the disbelievers with worldly riches; however, the disbelievers will have no share in the Hereafter.

The statement that people would have stuck to the same view is not given as a principle; it is given with regard to generality and the majority. Obviously, if worldly riches had only been given to the disbelievers, very few would have remained as believers – however, even if a few, there would have been some believers. Such is the nature on which the Almighty has created man that there would have been some noble souls who would succeed in the severest of trials and would have passed through the sea of fire without forsaking God.

25. Had it not been for the fact that people might have adopted one path, We would have made the house roofs of those who have rejected the Most Gracious Lord of silver and their stairways also which they climb roofs, and also their doors and their couches on which they recline.

وَزُخْرُفًا وَإِنْ كُلُّ ذَلِكَ لَمَّا مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةُ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ (٣٥)²⁶

The word زُخْرُفًا also connotes “embellishment” and also “gold” which is a means of embellishment. Grammatically, it can be regarded to be coordinated to the syntactical status of مِّنْ فَضَّةٍ and can also be regarded to be the object of a suppressed verb ie. لَجَعَلْنَا لِمَنْ يَكْفُرُ بِالرَّحْمَنِ زُخْرُفًا. There would not be much difference in either of these. That is if God wanted He could have made all the aforementioned things to be of gold or assemble for them heaps of gold.

The word لَمَّا here does not mean إِلَّا. It is in place of ل which comes to distinguish the shortened (*mukhaffafah*) أَنْ from the negative (*nāfiyah*) اَنْ. At times this ل is transformed into لَمَّا for the purpose of filling the sonic vacuum. A similar example can be seen in the following verse of Sūrah Tāriq: (٨٦:٤) إِنَّ كُلَّ نَفْسٍ لَّمَّا عَلَيْهَا حَافِظٌ (Indeed, every soul has a guardian over it, (86:4)). It was originally as: إِنَّ كُلَّ نَفْسٍ لَعَلَّيْهَا حَافِظٌ. However, this leaves a sonic vacuum. Thus in order to keep the rhythm intact the letter ل is transformed into لَمَّا, as per the accepted practice of the native Arabs. There are several examples of such additions in letters; however, occasion does not allow us to go into details.

The implied meaning is that these things with which people are infatuated are merely transient. The real everlasting favours will be granted in the Hereafter, and before the Prophet's Lord, the Hereafter solely belongs to those who fear God.

وَمَنْ يَعِشْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمَنِ نُفَيِّضْ لَهُ شَيْطَانًا فَهُوَ لَهُ قَرِينٌ (٣٦)²⁷

All their doubts and objections are artificial. The fact of the matter is that these people have shown complete indifference to the remembrance of God, and as per the established practice of God a devil is deputed by God on people who turn away from His remembrance who becomes their abiding companion; he does not leave them until he leads them to Hell.

The expression عِشَا عَنْ الشَّيْءِ means “to show indifference to something”. It is a trait of the heart of a human being that as long as the remembrance of God inhabits it, Satan cannot find any way into it; but when a person becomes indifferent to God, Satan slowly vanquishes it,

26. And We could have made these into gold as well. And these things are only provisions of worldly life and the life to come is reserved by your Lord for the virtuous.

27. And he who becomes indifferent to the remembrance of God, We depute a devil on him who becomes his companion.

and when he does so, it is not easy to escape from his grasp. Satan is able to raise doubts and objections against the best of advice and reminders that comes before a person thereby disillusioning him from it. However, Satan is not able to find a way into people who are able to drench their hearts with the remembrance of God, and if ever because of some negligence on their part if Satan is able to find his way into them, he is not able to abide their for long; as soon as a person realizes what has happened, Satan has to run away from there.

وَأَنَّهُمْ لَيَصْدُوْنَهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ وَيَحْسَبُوْنَ أَنَّهُمْ مُّهْتَدُوْنَ (٣٧)²⁸

In the previous verses, since the word مَنْ is not specific in nature, it can be used both for singular and plural entities. Moreover, the word شَيْطَان (satan) is also used in the general sense. It can refer to both the satans among men and among the jinn. For this reason, in the verse under discussion, the pronouns used are in the plural form. Here, the situation of a whole group is being mentioned. It is said that people who in this way come in the gasp of Satan, their ultimate fate is that they are stopped by satans from the treading the correct path but these people who have been lured away think that they are on the correct path.

Here the dispersion (*intishār*) found in the pronouns is also worthy of attention. The antecedent of the pronoun in إِنَّهُمْ is the Satans and the subject of the verb يَحْسَبُونَ is the people who are caught in the trap of Satans. In a discourse, whose meaning is evident, such dispersion in pronouns is not a defect. A very evident example of this is found in the following verse of Sūrah Yūsuf:

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا اسْتَيْأَسَ الرُّسُلُ وَظَنُّوْا أَنَّهُمْ قَدْ كُذِّبُوا جَاءَهُمْ نَصْرُنَا (١٢: ١١٠)

Until when the messengers are left with no hope in their nation embracing faith and the people of their nation start thinking that they were falsely threatened with punishment, then comes Our help to the messengers. (12:110).

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَنَا قَالَ يَا لَيْتَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكَ بُعْدَ الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ فَبِئْسَ الْقَرِينُ (٣٨)²⁹

The implication is that such companions and friends have very good

28. And they stop him from the path of God and they think that they are rightly guided.

29. Until when he comes to Us, he will say: “Would that I and you were as far apart as both borders of the East.” So what an evil companion he will be.

relations in this world, but in the Hereafter they will appear before God and the consequence of this friendship will come before them, then whoever would have ruined his fate by being lured away by Satan, he will curse his companion and would express the wish that he had been as far apart from him as the two Easts.

The words *فَيُبْسِ الْقَرِينُ* are an expression of curse and hate from the Almighty for the evil companion meaning what a bad companion is he who ultimately pushed his friend into the pit proved to be.

Our exegetes have generally interpreted the word *الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ* to mean the East and the West; however, in my opinion, this is not correct. At times, in Arabic the dual connotes the vastness of both sides of a thing. Similar, is the use of the plural on certain occasions. As examples, in the Qur'ān, the words *مشرقين* and *مغربين* and *مشارك* and *مغارب* are used in this sense. They have been explained at their relevant places.

وَلَنْ يَنْفَعَكُمْ الْيَوْمَ إِذْ ظَلَمْتُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ فِي الْعَذَابِ مُشْتَرِكُونَ (٣٩)

The expression *إِذْ ظَلَمْتُمْ* implies *أَنْفُسَكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا إِذْ ظَلَمْتُمْ*.

When this altercation? (between those who led astray and those were led astray will take place, it will be declared to them on behalf of the Almighty that when in the previous world they had wronged their souls after becoming followers and leaders of one another and were not prepared to think of the fate this will lead them to, then what assurance can they now receive after hurling curses on one another? This will not absolve either of them from blame; both will have to bear torment now; so they should bear it; the previous world was the place of these curses but there they remained faithful compatriots of one another; the time which has passed cannot come back to them.

أَفَأَنْتَ تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ أَوْ تَهْدِي الْعُمْيَ وَمَنْ كَانَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ (٤٠)

These words sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws): his advice and reminders can only be effective on those whose faculties of thinking and comprehension are alive; how can he remind and advise those who are deaf and have made themselves blind.

The implication of the words *وَمَنْ كَانَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ* is if the reason that people stray into error is that they are not aware of a reality or have little

30. And when you have wronged your souls, the thought that you will share the torment with one another will not benefit you.

31. So will you make the deaf hear or guide the blind or those in open error?

knowledge of it, then there can be a remedy for this; but how is it possible for someone to guide a person who is in open error and is also aware that he is inflicted with this error,

فَأَمَّا نَذْهَبَنَّ بِكَ فَإِنَّا مِنْهُمْ مُنْتَقِمُونَ (٤١) أَوْ نُرِيَنَّكَ الَّذِي وَعَدْنَاهُمْ فَإِنَّا عَلَيْهِمْ مُّقْتَدِرُونَ (٤٢)³²

This is a further statement of assurance to the Prophet (sws). The verse tells him to leave these people who have wronged their souls to themselves; either the Almighty will give death to him and then take revenge from them or the punishment which the Almighty is threatening them with will visit them in the Prophet's presence and he too will witness their fate. The Almighty is full capable of punishing them. This subject has also been discussed in the forty sixth verse of Sūrah Yūnus and the fortieth verse of Sūrah Ra'd. Those who are interested in details can look them up.

فَاسْتَمْسِكْ بِالَّذِي أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ إِنَّكَ عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ (٤٣)³³

The verse implies that in spite of the frivolous talk and opposition of these people, the Prophet (sws) should strongly adhere to his call to monotheism and this Book which is revealed to him. He only is on the right path. The words صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ here particularly refer to the call of monotheism which has been given earlier in this *sūrah*. The implication is that his opponents do not have any argument; they are the advocates of a baseless claim while he is on strong basis; he should adhere to his stance; soon his opponents will be defeated.

وَإِنَّهُ لَذِكْرٌ لَّكَ وَلِقَوْمِكَ وَسَوْفَ تُسْأَلُونَ (٤٤)³⁴

The verse refers to the fact that this Qur'ān which has been revealed to the Prophet (sws) is a reminder for him as well as for his nation, and one day each person including him will be held accountable. His accountability will be whether he faithfully delivered to people in its original form whatever was revealed to him and what was the response

32. Thus either We will take you way and take revenge from them or let you see what We have promised them. Hence We have full power over them.

33. Therefore hold fast to that which is revealed to you. Indeed, you are on a straight path.

34. And this is a reminder for you and for your people and soon you all shall be questioned.

of his people. The accountability of the nation will be about what they have done in spite of the coming of a warner to them. In Sūrah A'rāf, this is mentioned in the following words:

فَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ الَّذِينَ أُرْسِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ الْمُرْسَلِينَ فَلَنَقْضَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ بِعِلْمٍ وَمَا كُنَّا غَآئِبِينَ (٧: ٦-٧)

Thus We shall necessarily ask the people to whom the messengers were sent and will also ask the messengers themselves. Then We will relate their complete tale in the light of complete knowledge; We have not remained absent anywhere. (7:6-7)

The questions and answers with the messengers and their nations are mentioned at many places in the Qur'ān.

The messengers will be asked of the responsibility of communication of divine messages to their respective nations, while these nations will be asked whether they valued the great favour of the Almighty which came to them in the form of the messengers of God. After that, the messengers and their companions will be given the reward they are worthy of, and the rejecters of the messengers will be meted out the punishment they would deserve. These words are an assurance to the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) and his companions and are a threat to his opponents: the matter is not going to end today; one day, the whole case will be presented in the court of God and there one will come to know who won and who lost.

وَاسْأَلْ مَنْ أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رُسُلِنَا أَجَعَلْنَا مِنْ دُونِ الرَّحْمَنِ آلِهَةً يُعْبَدُونَ (٤٥)³⁵

This verse refutes the claim of the Idolaters that those whom they worship because God has directed them to do so. The verse says that it is the messenger of God from whom the directives of God can be known; so they should ask the messengers who came before the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) if God has set up other deities besides Him who are worthy of worship.

The words *وَاسْأَلْ مَنْ أَرْسَلْنَا* are of a subtle style. Obviously the word *رُسُل* refers to their teachings and Books which reflect their message. This style is often employed in earlier scriptures, and its examples can also be found in the orations of eloquent orators.

35. And ask the messengers whom We sent before you: "Did we set up gods other than the merciful Lord to be worshipped."

Section III: Verses (46-56)

The succeeding verses concisely mention the account of Moses (sws) and the Pharaoh. The objective firstly is to present historical evidence on the revenge of God mentioned in verses forty one and forty two earlier: after a nation denies its messenger, its fate is necessarily decided whether in this own lifetime or after his migration or death. This revenge of God is an established practice of His and no nation has been able to save itself from this grasp. When the ruthless Pharaoh became a prey to this established practice, he and all his army was drowned. His might and power was of no avail to him.

Secondly, this is an example of the fact mentioned in verse forty: people who ruin their faculties of intellect and deliberately adopt the path of error are not guided by any sign. They remain blind after witnessing the greatest of miracles; only God's decision to mete out punishment to them opens their eyes.

Thirdly, this also bears witness to the reality stated in verse forty five: all messengers of God called people to the very monotheism the Qur'ān is calling them to. No messenger ever called his people to worship some other deity than God.

Readers may proceed to study the subsequent verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَىٰ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ فَقَالَ إِنِّي رَسُولُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٤٦) فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ بِآيَاتِنَا إِذَا هُمْ مِّنْهَا يَضْحَكُونَ (٤٧) وَمَا نُرِيهِمْ مِّنْ آيَةٍ إِلَّا هِيَ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ أُخْتِهَا وَأَخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْعَذَابِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ (٤٨) وَقَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا السَّاحِرُ ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ بِمَا عَهِدَ عِنْدَكَ إِنَّنَا لَمُهْتَدُونَ (٤٩) فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابَ إِذَا هُمْ يَنْكُتُونَ (٥٠) وَنَادَىٰ فِرْعَوْنُ فِي قَوْمِهِ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَلَيْسَ لِي مُلْكُ مِصْرَ وَهَذِهِ الْأَنْهَارُ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِي أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ (٥١) أَمْ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْ هَذَا الَّذِي هُوَ مَهِينٌ وَلَا يَكَادُ يُبِينُ (٥٢) فَلَوْلَا أُلْقِيَ عَلَيْهِ أَسْوِرَةٌ مِّنْ ذَهَبٍ أَوْ جَاءَ مَعَهُ الْمَلَأُكُّهُ مُقَتَّرِينَ (٥٣) فَاسْتَحَفَّ قَوْمَهُ فَأَطَاعُوهُ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ (٥٤) فَلَمَّا آسَفُونَا انتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٥٥) فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ سَلَفًا وَمَثَلًا لِّلْآخِرِينَ (٥٦)

And We sent forth Moses with Our signs to the Pharaoh and his

nobles. So he called upon them: "I have come to you as the Messenger of the Lord of the Universe." But when he came to them with Our signs they would make fun of him. And We kept on showing them signs, one greater than the other, and We also seized them with a punishment so that they may take heed. (46-48).

And they requested: "O Sorcerer! Pray for us to your Lord on the basis of the promise He has made you. Now we will definitely be among the ones who are guided. So when We would put off the punishment from them, they would break their pledge. (49-50)

And the Pharaoh made a proclamation to his people. "My people! Is the kingdom of Egypt not mine! And these canals which flow beneath my feet! So can't you people see? Therefore, Is he better or am I better than this despicable wretch and can also not clearly speak, So why did this not happen that bracelets of gold would have been sent down to him or angels arrayed in rows accompanied him?" Thus in this manner he befooled his people and they obeyed him. They were a defiant people. So when they provoked Us, We took revenge from them and drowned them all and made them a tale of the past and an example for others. (51-56)

Explanation

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَىٰ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ فَقَالَ إِنِّي رَسُولُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ³⁶

The word آيَاتِ refers to the signs with which the Almighty equipped Moses (sws) and sent him to the Pharaoh. These included the staff and the white hand among others.

The word مَلَائِ refers to the nobles and chiefs of the Pharaoh who would attend his royal court. This word has been explained in the previous *sūrahs*.

The words إِنِّي رَسُولُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ form the call given by Moses (sws) to the Pharaoh and his people. It is concisely stated here; however, at other instances, it is stated in detail that he informed the Pharaoh and his courtiers that he has been sent by God to them to warn them; God has given him signs and with the directive of God his demand is that he should be allowed to take the Israelites with him for the purpose of worship to a desert situated three days from their place.

36. And We sent forth Moses with Our signs to the Pharaoh and his nobles. So he called upon them: "I have come to you as the Messenger of the Lord of the Universe."

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ بِآيَاتِنَا إِذَا هُمْ مِنْهَا يَضْحَكُونَ (٤٧)³⁷

Here, as per contextual indication, this much is suppressed in the discourse that when the Pharaoh and his courtiers heard that Moses (sws) claimed to be a Messenger of the Lord of the worlds, and he also has certain proofs to substantiate this claim, they demanded from him to show the signs. Thus Moses (sws) showed them these signs; however, instead of acknowledging these signs, they made fun of him and regarded them to be tricks and stunts and declared that they have magicians who can show much better tricks than the ones he has showed.

وَمَا نُرِيهِمْ مِنْ آيَةٍ إِلَّا هِيَ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ أُخْتِهَا وَأَخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْعَذَابِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ (٤٨)³⁸

As per a conventional rule of grammar, an incomplete verb is suppressed before نُرِيهِمْ. The meaning of the word keeping in view this suppression would be: We kept on showing them one sign greater than the other so that they can turn to God. This is a reference to those signs which descended on them as punishments of warning after the initial ones had been rejected. The purpose was to give some idea to the Pharaoh and his people about the grasp of God and they show inclination to repent. These signs manifested themselves one after the other in the form of various torments, and quite naturally each succeeding sign was more exemplary than its preceding one. However, such was the hard-heartedness of these people that no sign could influence them until they became the targets of the decisive punishment.

وَقَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا السَّاحِرُ ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ بِمَا عَهِدَ عِنْدَكَ إِنَّنَا لَمُهْتَدُونَ (٤٩) فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابَ إِذَا هُمْ يَنْكُثُونَ (٥٠)³⁹

Whenever they were seized by a punishment, they would come running to Moses (sws) and would earnestly request him to pray to his Lord for them to shed this punishment from them and that if this punishment is shed from them they would adopt the right path and will accept what Moses (sws) has said to them. However, when the Almighty would take away the punishment from them, they would break their promise and

37. But when he came to them with Our signs they would make fun of him.

38. And We kept on showing them signs, one greater the other, and We also seized them with a punishment so that they may take heed.

39. And they requested: "O Sorcerer! Pray for us to your Lord on the basis of the promise He has made you. Now we will definitely be among the ones who are guided. So when We would put off the punishment from them, they would break their pledge.

become adamant on their old ways.

The details of these warning punishments are mentioned in Sūrah A'raf. There I have explained each verse in the light of the Torah. I am citing the verses here. For details, their explanation can be looked up.

فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الطُّوفَانَ وَالْجَرَادَ وَالْقُمَّلَ وَالضَّفَادِعَ وَالدَّمَ آيَاتٍ مُفَصَّلَاتٍ
فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا مُجْرِمِينَ وَلَمَّا وَقَعَ عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّجْزُ قَالُوا يَا مُوسَى ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ
بِمَا عَاهَدَ عِنْدَكَ لَئِنْ كَشَفْتَ عَنَّا الرِّجْزَ لَنُؤْمِنَنَّ لَكَ وَلَنُرْسِلَنَّ مَعَكَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ
فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ الرِّجْزَ إِلَى أَجَلٍ هُمْ بِالْعُوهِ إِذَا هُمْ يَنْكُثُونَ (٧: ١٣٣-١٣٥)

So We sent on them: the floods and locusts and lice and frogs, and blood as elucidated signs; yet they showed arrogance and they are a people criminal. And when a calamity came upon them, they would request: "O Moses! With reference to the promise made with you by God, pray for us. If you remove this calamity from us, we shall definitely accept what you say and let the Israelites go with you." But when We removed the calamity from them for a fixed period which they had to reach, behold! they would break their word! (7:133-135)

Addressing Moses (sws) by the words is not meant to show derision or disrespect to him. In the Egyptian society of those times, magicians and sorcerers held the same status as is held by scholars and Sufis in a society. This address, thus is an address of respect.

The words بِمَا عَاهَدَ عِنْدَكَ have already been explained in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah A'rāf. The implication is that since the Almighty has promised that He will grant the prayer of Moses (sws), it shall be accepted if Moses (sws) prays to God with its reference.

The word لَمَّا here means كَلَّمَا. This has also been explained in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah A'rāf. For this reason, the mention of إِذَا which connotes suddenness (*mufājah*) is very appropriate here.

وَنَادَى فِرْعَوْنُ فِي قَوْمِهِ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَلَيْسَ لِي مُلْكُ مِصْرَ وَهَذِهِ الْأَنْهَارُ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِي
أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ (٥١)⁴⁰

The words وَنَادَى فِرْعَوْنُ فِي قَوْمِهِ mean that the Pharaoh made a proclamation in his nation. Readers may look up verses 31-35 above in which the following words of the leaders of the Quraysh are cited: وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا

40. And the Pharaoh made a proclamation to his people. "My people! Is the kingdom of Egypt not mine! And these canals which flow beneath my feet!

نُزِّلَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ عَلَى رَجُلٍ مِّنَ الْقَرْيَتَيْنِ عَظِيمٍ (And they objected: “Why was this Qur’ān not revealed to some prominent person of the two cities.”). Precisely for the same reason, when the Pharaoh saw that the miracles worked by Moses (sws) and the arguments presented by him is shaking the respect and devotion his nation had for him, he made an announcement among his people that the kingdom of Egypt and its running canals are in his possession; so how is it possible that if God wanted to make someone a messenger, it should be someone other than him.

أَمْ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْ هَذَا الَّذِي هُوَ مَهِينٌ وَلَا يَكَادُ يُبِينُ (٥٢)⁴¹

A part of the discourse is suppressed in this verse. Numerous examples of such suppression before interrogative sentences can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*. If this suppression is unveiled, the whole discourse would be something to the effect: When the kingdom of Egypt and its rivers and canals are in my possession, then is this person who is from an enslaved nation and is not even able to articulate his words better than me who is the sole owner of all the treasures and riches of this whole country. In other words, if this is the situation, then what is in this person that God made him a messenger.

The word مَهِينٌ refers to the fact that Moses (sws) was the member of a enslaved nation, and the words لَا يَكَادُ يُبِينُ refer to the weakness in the speech of Moses (sws). I have explained under the verse:

(:) (and untie the knot of my tongue, (20:27)) that Moses (sws) was not inflicted with the malady of stammering, as has been generally understood; however, he was not a forceful orator, and in those times it was essential that if a person was to gain public prominence he had to be prominent either in sorcery, poetry, oratory or in some other thing. The Pharaoh censured Moses (sws) on this weakness of his that on the one hand, he is the member of an enslaved nation and on the other hand, he is not an orator; so how can such a person claim leadership while challenging him.

فَلَوْلَا أُلْقِيَ عَلَيْهِ أَسْوِرَةٌ مِّنْ ذَهَبٍ أَوْ جَاءَ مَعَهُ الْمَلَأِكَةُ مُقَرَّرِينَ (٥٣)⁴²

These words form part of the Pharaoh’s speech: if Moses (sws) claims that there is a God Who has sent him as His Messenger, then it should

41. So can’t you people see? Therefore, Is he better or am I better than this despicable wretch and can also not clearly speak,

42. So why did this not happen that bracelets of gold would have been sent down to him or angels arrayed in rows accompanied him?”

have been the case that bracelets of gold should have been sent down to embellish him and the angels should have walked in groups alongside him; however, such is the poverty-stricken state of this claimant of being God's envoy and his pennilessness is evident before all and sundry; why should God's messenger come in such a state of indigence.

It may be kept in consideration here that in those times kings, particularly of Egypt and Persia would wear gold bracelets to display their grandeur and majesty and appearing in the company of army bands was also a norm of royal grandeur just as it is today.

فَاسْتَحَفَّ قَوْمَهُ فَأَطَاعُوهُ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ (٥٤)

The word is *إِسْتَحَفَّ* the opposite of *إِسْتَنْقَلَ*. *إِسْتَنْقَلَ* means to regard something as heavy, burdensome and big. Thus *إِسْتَحَفَّ* would mean to regard something to have no weight and status and to be insignificant. The expression *فَاسْتَحَفَّ قَوْمَهُ* would mean that he found his nation to be simpletons and lured them away, and like fools it was entrapped by him.

The words *إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ* imply that these people were disobedient to God and deprived of belief in Him. Thus had no weight and were insignificant. Satan easily gets hold of such people and Satan leads them to any place he wants to. A person becomes weighty by his relationship with God. If this weight is not in the scale of his balance, then his status is no more than of rubbish; a light gust of wind will blow it away.

فَلَمَّا آسَفُونَا انتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٥٥)

The word *آسَفَهُ* means *أَغْضَبَهُ*; ie he angered him. The verse says that when they angered God because of their misdeeds, the Almighty also finally took His revenge and had all of them drowned. It may be borne in mind that the Pharaoh followed Moses (sws) with all his military might and all his nobles and chiefs; for this reason, the torment engulfed all of them.

فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ سَلَفًا وَمَثَلًا لِلْآخِرِينَ (٥٦)

The actual meaning of the word *سَلَف* is "to pass". From here, it came to be used for people who have passed away. The *سَلَف* can be good and they

43. Thus in this manner he befuddled his people and they obeyed him. They were a defiant people.

44. So when they provoked Us, We took revenge from them

45. and drowned them all and made them a tale of the past and an example for others.

can be evil. Here it refers to the latter meaning. The implied meaning would be: We destroyed them in such a manner that they became an ancient tale. This same meaning is implied by the words جَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَحَادِيثَ at some instances in the Qur'ān. This verse actually warns the Quraysh that if they follow the ways of the Pharaoh and his people, then they too shall be destroyed and they will become a tale of the ancients.

In the expression وَمَثَلًا لِلْآخِرِينَ the word مَثَل means “an example and a sample”. Examples can be good and they can be bad. Here it is the latter and for this reason it means an example that teaches a lesson. The expression would mean: We made them such an evil example that people could learn a lesson about the fate of those who show arrogance before God.

Section IV: Verses (57-65)

For the very purpose the account of Abraham (sws) and Moses (sws) were related earlier, a part of the account of Jesus (sws) is mentioned concisely in the succeeding verses: he too called people towards monotheism but those who claimed to be his followers were afflicted with religious innovations and they fabricated these innovations as blatant defiance of his teachings and elevated him to the status of god.

The account of Jesus (sws) begins with the mention of the fact that if the name of Jesus (sws) is taken the quarrelsome elements among the Quraysh work up the mischief that this person praises Jesus (sws) whereas their own deities are better than Jesus (sws) because they are angels and daughters of God whereas Jesus (sws) is born of Mary. In this manner, they would befool their followers that if the Qur'ān mentions him, it mentions him in the capacity of son of God the way Christians believe and mentions him to call upon people to worship him. The fact of the matter is that the Qur'ān mentions him as a servant of God and His messenger; he too called people towards the same monotheism towards which other prophets of God called. However, these miscreants who are fond of indulging in polemic debates want to create mischief from simple things.

Readers may now proceed to study the subsequent verses.

Text and Translation

وَلَمَّا ضَرَبَ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ مَثَلًا إِذَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْهُ يَصِدُّونَ (٥٧) وَقَالُوا آلَإِلهَتُنَا خَيْرٌ أَمْ هُوَ مَا ضَرَبُوهُ لَكَ إِلَّا جَدَلًا بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ خَصِمُونَ (٥٨) إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا عَبْدٌ أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلْنَاهُ

مَثَلًا لِّبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ (٥٩) وَلَوْ نَشَاءُ لَجَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ مَلَائِكَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ يَخْلُقُونَ (٦٠) وَإِنَّهُ لَعِلْمٌ لِّلْسَاعَةِ فَلَا تَمْتَرَنَّ بِهَا وَاتَّبِعُونِ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ (٦١) وَلَا يَصُدَّنَّكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ (٦٢) وَلَمَّا جَاءَ عِيسَى بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ قَالَ قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَلِأُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي تَخْتَلِفُونَ فِيهِ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا (٦٣) إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ (٦٤) فَاخْتَلَفَ الْأَحْزَابُ مِنْ بَيْنِهِمْ فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْ عَذَابٍ يَوْمَ الْإِيمِ (٦٥)

And when Mary's son is cited as an example, your people cry out and say: "Who is better; our gods or he?" They say this only to indulge in quibbling. In fact, they are indeed a contentious nation. He was but a servant of mine whom We favoured and made an example to the Israelites. And if it had been Our will, We could have made angels from among you who would be vicegerents on earth. (57-60)

And indeed he is a great sign of the Hour of Doom. So have no doubt about it and follow Me. This is this straight path and let not Satan stop you from it; indeed, he is your open foe. (61-62)

And when Jesus came with evident signs, he said: "I have come to you with al-hikmah to make plain to you some of the things you differ about. So fear God and follow me. Indeed, God alone is my Lord and your Lord: therefore serve Him only. This is the straight path. Yet their factions disagreed among themselves. Thus devastation of a woeful punishment be for those who have committed polytheism. (63-65)

Explanation

وَلَمَّا ضَرَبَ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ مَثَلًا إِذَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْهُ يَصِدُّونَ (٥٧) وَقَالُوا آلِهَتُنَا خَيْرٌ أَمْ هُوَ مَا ضَرَبُوهُ لَكَ إِلَّا جَدَلًا بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ خَصِمُونَ (٥٨)⁴⁶

When the name of Jesus (sws) and his message is taken before the Prophet's nation that he too preached this religion of monotheism which was preached by all religions the pugnacious elements work mischief from this mention. They cry out that look at this person; he decries their idols but praises Jesus (sws) even though their deities are angels and Jesus (sws) is only Mary's son. In this manner, they would try to give this impression to their people that if the Qur'ān mentions Jesus (sws), he mentions him in

46. And when Mary's son is cited as an example, your people cry out and say: "Who is better; our gods or he?" They say this only to indulge in quibbling. In fact, they are indeed a contentious nation.

the capacity of a deity and that this is no less than a conspiracy to lessen the respect and honour they have for their ancestral deities and to implant in their minds in place of it the divinity of Jesus (sws).

The words مَا ضَرُّهُ لَكَ إِلَّا جَدَلًا بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ خَصِمُونَ say that they have played this prank only to create dispute and argumentation. They very well know that if the Qur'ān mentions Jesus (sws), he does not mention him in the capacity of a deity but as a servant of God and His messenger; like other prophets and messengers he too called people to monotheism. In spite of knowing all this, they have merely created this mischief to get hold of an excuse to oppose the Qur'ān and the Prophet (sws) and to incite people that this person is trying to obliterate their ancestral religion and wants to impose Christianity upon them. The verse says that these are but a contentious people. It is not incidental that they have worked this ploy; the fact of the matter is that creating mischief and spreading evil has become their trait.

It may be kept in mind here that the quarrelsome leaders of the Quraysh had worked up a similar mischief regarding the word الرَّحْمَن. I have already explained this in the *tafsīr* of verse 110 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl. Readers may look it up. The Quraysh were not unaware that الرَّحْمَن was God's name. However, since it was used a lot by the People of the Book, in particular the Christians, they started to incite their people that this person is trying to impose the views and beliefs of others upon them. To substantiate this claim of theirs, they would say that the scripture he is presenting abundantly mentions the word الرَّحْمَن. By relying on such things, these Idolaters would also say that there are some among the People of the Book who teach this person and the purpose of this conspiracy, they would contend, is to obliterate their religion and traditions.

Such pranks are very effective in situations of distrust and mis-conjecture. The minds of the masses are very raw. They accept such things very easily, and when they accept them, then it is not easy to scrape them out of their minds.

The expression صَدَّ مِنَ الشَّيْءِ means to cry out after expressing disgust at something. This word is not conventionally used to make noise after being happy at something.

إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا عَبْدٌ أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلْنَاهُ مَثَلًا لِّبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ (٥٩)

If the Qur'ān is presenting Jesus (sws) as an example, then it is not in

47. He was but a servant of mine whom We favoured and made an example to the Israelites.

the capacity of a deity but in the capacity of a servant of God who was specially blessed by Him and made an example before the Israelites as a person who led an exemplary life. The special blessing here refers to his traits which have been mentioned in detail in the Qur'ān at other instances: he was born from the directive of *kun* (be) without a father; he was specially helped by the Holy spirit; his conversation was steeped in wisdom even when he spoke in his cradle; he was made a messenger by God; he taught wisdom to people; he worked amazing miracles and God did not allow any of the conspiracies hatched against him by the Jews to succeed; so much so, the Qur'ān refuted the feat on which the Jews were so proud of and declared that he was not crucified and the Jews never succeeded in this conspiracy of theirs against him.

The words مَثَلًا لِّبَنِي إِسْرَآئِيلَ refer to the fact that the Almighty made Jesus (sws) an example for the Israelites so that they could review and correct all their misdoings in life after seeing his life. No doubt, each messenger occupies the status of a divine court for the reformation of his people, and it is in following his noble example that the people are able to succeed in the Hereafter; however, the Almighty gave Jesus (sws) a special birth and equipped him with open miracles in order to stir and prod the Israelites who had forgotten the teachings of their prophets. But their hearts had hardened so much that they did not learn a lesson from this example. As a result of which the Almighty hurled His eternal curse on them.

وَلَوْ نَشَاءُ لَجَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ مَلَائِكَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ يَخْلُفُونَ (٦٠)⁴⁸

Earlier the words أَلِهَتُنَا خَيْرٌ أَمْ هُوَ (“Who is better; our gods or he?”) of the Idolaters have been cited. This verse is a comment on these words: if the Idolaters regard angels as worthy of worship merely because they have been created from a superior substance (light), then this is nothing of significance which can make someone worthy of worship. Such is the power and might of God that just as He can create angels from light, He can even create people who have angelic traits and they carry out the responsibility of *khilāfah* which is entrusted to human beings. However, this is against the wisdom of God. Hence, He did not do this. In other words, the mere creation of something from light or fire or without a father does not make him god or a partner of God. All these things are in the power of God; Hence, He Who is the creator of this universe is alone worthy of worship

48. And if it had been Our will, We could have made angels from among you who would be vicegerents on earth.

وَإِنَّهُ لَعِلْمٌ لِّلسَّاعَةِ فَلَا تَمْتَرُنَّ بِهَا وَاتَّبِعُونِ هَٰذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيمٌ (٦١) وَلَا يَصُدَّنَّكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ (٦٢)⁴⁹

Here the quarrelsome people are warned through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that they should not exaggerate things: Jesus (sws) is not being presented as someone worthy of worship or as a son of God; the fact of the matter is that he is one who called people towards monotheism and is 'ilm ie certain sign of the Hereafter; so they should have no doubts about the Hereafter and instead of getting entangled and entangling people in polemical debates, they should follow him (ie. Muḥammad (sws)); for this is the straight path of guidance and success

وَلَمَّا جَاءَ عِيسَىٰ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ قَالَ قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَلِأُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي تَخْتَلِفُونَ فِيهِ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ (٦٣)⁵⁰

This is an allusion to the purpose of the advent of Jesus (sws) and to the message he preached: he came with very clear signs from God and called upon the Israelites that he has not brought a new religion to them; he has brought the same religion taught to them by Moses (sws); however, he has indeed come to them with the wisdom and spirit behind religious directives from which they had deprived themselves so that a believing life is enkindled in them; he has also indeed come to them to give them the true verdict in certain differences they had become entangled in. It is evident from contextual indication that the sentence conjugated to وَلِأُبَيِّنَ is suppressed. I have just explained it.

It should remain evident that Jesus (sws) did not bring a new *sharī'ah*. He only corroborated the Torah and wanted to make aware the Israelites of the spirit and essence of religion; however, the Israelites did not duly value this and remained enslaved to the exterior form of religion. The result of this attitude was that the real religion was lost to them and only some rituals remained observing which made them satisfied – thinking that they had fulfilled all the obligations of religion imposed on them.

If the wisdom and spirit of religion is lost and only rituals and words

49. And indeed he is a great sign of the Hour of Doom. So have no doubt about it and follow Me. This is this straight path and let not Satan stop you from it; indeed, he is your open foe.

50. And when Jesus came with evident signs, he said: "I have come to you with al-hikmah to make plain to you some of the things you differ about. So fear God and follow me.

remain, an essential consequence of this also is that various types of differences arise in religion resolving which becomes impossible. The Jews too were caught up in this trial after being deprived of the spirit of religion. By teaching them the spirit of religion, Jesus (sws) wanted to resolve their religious differences but the Jews did not duly value his teaching. The result was that their differences kept on increasing and until they reached their present state of theirs, which was an essential outcome of their ungrateful attitude.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ (٦٤)⁵¹

Precisely this sentence occurs in verse fifty one of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān with just one change of word. I have already fully explained this in the *tafsīr* of that verse. This verse mentions the real message of Jesus (sws). Like other prophets and messengers he too called people to monotheism, and not to worship him or some one other. While explaining verse fifty one of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān, I have written that the words of the Gospel: “My father and your father ...”⁵² refer to exactly what the Qur’ān has said here by the words: إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ. In the connotation in which they would regard God to be their father, in the same connotation they would regard Him to be the father of others and only regarded Him to be worthy of worship. In the *tafsīr* of verse fifty one of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān, I have also alluded to the fact that the word أَب in Hebrew is used both to refer to the father and to God, and the sense in which it is used is governed by the context and occasion.

The words هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ refer to the fact that this is the straight path which leads to God. If someone else is made God’s partner, then this straight path will become contorted or blocked.

فَاخْتَلَفَ الْأَحْزَابُ مِنْ بَيْنِهِمْ فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْ عَذَابٍ يَوْمَ الْيَمِّ (٦٥)⁵³

The verse implies that Jesus (sws) very clearly and categorically called his people towards monotheism. However, various groups from among his followers adopted different views. I have already explained the nature of these differences at an appropriate place of this *tafsīr*. After Jesus (sws) except for the followers of Simon Peter all other sects

51. Indeed, God alone is my Lord and your Lord: therefore serve Him only. This is the straight path.

52. See, for example: John, 20:17.

53. Yet their factions disagreed among themselves. Thus devastation of a woeful punishment be for those who have committed polytheism.

adopted the beliefs of trinity and atonement, thereby totally obliterating the teaching of monotheism put forth by him. The present Christianity is nothing but a collection of St Paul's religious innovations, and in the interpretation of his interpretations many sects came into being.

In the sentence: *لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْ عَذَابِ يَوْمِ أَلِيمٍ*, the words *لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا* refer to those people who wronged their souls by being inflicted with polytheism. The sentence says that for such people is the destruction of punishment of a painful day.

Section IV: Verses (66-89)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah* in which first the believers are informed of their good fate and the disbelievers are informed of their evil fate. After this, while assuring the Prophet (sws), he is directed to ignore those who make fun of God's guidance and remain indifferent to their fate. In the end, people are reminded of *tawhīd* again so that those who have no fear of the Hereafter because of their baseless concept of intercession should keep in mind that on that Day each one will face the one and only God, and no recommendation of a person shall avail anyone else.

Readers may not proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا السَّاعَةَ أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمْ بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ (٦٦) الْأَخِلَاءُ يَوْمَئِذٍ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ إِلَّا الْمُتَّقِينَ (٦٧) يَا عِبَادِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ تَحْزَنُونَ (٦٨) الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا مُسْلِمِينَ (٦٩) ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ أَنْتُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ تُحْبَرُونَ (٧٠) يُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِصِحَافٍ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَأَكْوَابٍ وَفِيهَا مَا تَشْتَهِيهِ الْأَنْفُسُ وَتَلَذُّ الْأَعْيُنُ وَأَنْتُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (٧١) وَتِلْكَ الْجَنَّةُ الَّتِي أُورِثْتُمُوهَا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٧٢) لَكُمْ فِيهَا فَاكِهَةٌ كَثِيرَةٌ مِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ (٧٣) إِنَّ الْمُجْرِمِينَ فِي عَذَابٍ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدُونَ (٧٤) لَا يُفَقَّرُ عَنْهُمْ وَهُمْ فِيهِ مُبْلِسُونَ (٧٥) وَمَا ظَلَمْنَاهُمْ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا هُمُ الظَّالِمِينَ (٧٦) وَنَادَوْا يَا مَالِكُ لِيَقْضِ عَلَيْنَا رَبُّكَ قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ مَا كُنتُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَكُمْ لِلْحَقِّ كَارِهُونَ (٧٧) أَمْ أَبْرَمُوا أَمْرًا فَإِنَّا مُبْرِمُونَ (٧٨) أَمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّا لَا نَسْمَعُ سِرَّهُمْ وَنَجْوَاهُمْ بَلَىٰ وَرُسُلُنَا لَدَيْهِمْ يَكْتُبُونَ (٨٠) قُلْ إِنْ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمَنِ وَلَدٌ فَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْعَابِدِينَ (٨١) سُبْحَانَ رَبِّ

السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ (٨٢) فَذَرَهُمْ يَحْزُضُوا وَيَلْعَبُوا حَتَّى يُلَاقُوا يَوْمَهُمُ الَّذِي يُوعَدُونَ (٨٣) وَهُوَ الَّذِي فِي السَّمَاءِ إِلَهٌ وَفِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَهٌ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْعَلِيمُ (٨٤) وَتَبَارَكَ الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَعِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٨٥) وَلَا يَمْلِكُ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ الشَّفَاعَةَ إِلَّا مَنْ شَهِدَ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ (٨٦) وَلَئِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَهُمْ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ فَأَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ (٨٧) وَقِيلَ يَا رَبِّ إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ قَوْمٌ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٨٨) فَاصْفَحْ عَنْهُمْ وَقُلْ سَلَامٌ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ (٨٩)

These people are only waiting for the hour of doom to come upon them suddenly and catch them unaware. All friends on the day shall become enemies to one another except the God-fearing. (66-67)

O My servants! You have nothing to fear nor will you be sorrowful, who have believed in Our revelations and remained obedient. Enter Paradise, you and those who shared your beliefs; you shall be blessed with delight. They shall be served with golden dishes and golden cups and in them will be that which they are desirous of and with which their eyes rejoice in. And you will remain herein forever and this is the Paradise which you have inherited by virtue of your deeds. And in it shall be many fruits from which you shall eat. (68-73)

Indeed, the sinners shall endure forever the torment of Hell. It will not be lessened for them, and they shall remain in it in despair. And We did not wrong them, but they themselves wronged their souls. And they will cry out: "O master! Would that your Lord end our existence. He will reply: "You will remain in this situation." (74-77)

And We came to you with the truth but your majority detested the truth. Have they taken a firm decision so that We also make a firm decision. Do they think that We cannot hear their secrets and their whispers? Yes! We are hearing and Our angels who are by their side, record it. (78-80)

Say: "If the Merciful God had a son, I will be the first to worship him." Exalted be the Lord of the heavens and the earth, the Lord of the Throne, above what they say. Leave them to indulge in pleasantries and in jest until they face the day they are being threatened with. (81-83)

And He alone is God in the heavens and He only is God on earth and only He is the real Wise and All-knowing One, and extremely blessed is He Who has sovereignty over the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them! And He alone has knowledge of the Hour of Doom, and to Him shall you be recalled. And those whom they invoke besides Him do not have the power to intercede for them except for those who will

bear witness to the truth and they will fully know as well. Yet if you ask them who created them, they will surely say: “God.” Where then do they wander about? And the words of those who will bear witness to the truth will be: “Lord, these people never professed faith.” So ignore them and say: “Peace be to you.” Thus, they shall soon come to know. (84-89)

Explanation

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا السَّاعَةَ أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمْ بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ (٦٦)⁵⁴

After citing the above quoted arguments, this verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws): if they are not listening to him, then it is because they do not value his advice and reminders. Their attitude shows that instead of paying heed and doing some deeds for the Hereafter, they want that the hour of doom should come upon them suddenly and catch them unaware. If this is what they want, then the Prophet (sws) should leave them to themselves. God wanted them to earn something for the dreadful day before it comes. However, since they want to meet it suddenly, there is no use being anxious for them. They themselves will see the fate of this heedlessness.

الْأَخِلَاءُ يَوْمَئِذٍ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ إِلَّا الْمُتَّقِينَ (٦٧)⁵⁵

These people trust their friends, helpers, tribe, nation and deities and intercessors and this trust has made them totally heedless and fearless of the Hereafter; however, on the day which is to come in the future the closest of friends and the closest of relatives will be of no benefit to a person; in fact, all these friends will become mutual enemies in the Hereafter because it was this mutual friendship which became cause of their eternal doom. If they had not been “yes-men” who support each others’ views and instead had reflected with freedom and seriousness on the good and evil they were faced with, they would never have been deprived of the blessings of the sincere counsel and advice of the Prophet (sws) and his companions. On that day, every person will be dejected at his deprivation and will censure his friends. However, all these wailings be of no avail. Verses thirty six to thirty nine discuss this very issue in a very effective way.

The words *إِلَّا الْمُتَّقِينَ* refer to the fact that the believers and the pious

54. These people are only waiting for the hour of doom to come upon them suddenly and catch them unaware.

55. All friends on the day shall become enemies to one another except the God-fearing.

will remain protected from this evil fate. They used to advise and counsel one another about what was the truth and what was just and also practiced on their own counsel. For this reason, they will rejoice on the Day of Judgement on their success and welcome their companions with peace and salutations.

يَا عِبَادِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ تَحْزَنُونَ (٦٨) الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا مُسْلِمِينَ (٦٩) ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ أَنْتُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ تُحْبَرُونَ (٧٠)⁵⁶

These are words of congratulations from God to these pious people: after being rid of the place of trial in which they were afflicted with both fear and sorrow, they have entered this eternal kingdom where fear and sorrow will not bother them at all. I have already explained at a place that fear relates to the dangers of the future and sorrow to the failures and afflictions of the present and the past. Paradise is a place where believers will be shielded from both these elements; thus these words لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ تَحْزَنُونَ (there shall be no fear on you on this day nor any sorrow) are a very apt style to depict the life of Paradise.

The words الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا مُسْلِمِينَ portray the attributes of the pious people on the basis of which they became worthy of such a great reward. By the mention of these attributes the discourse becomes in direct conformity with the situation. It is as if the Almighty has pinpointed the fact that this high status will be deserved by only those who today profess faith in His signs and follow His directives with full sincerity. It is an obvious outcome of this that those who claim to have professed faith but do not sincerely follow His directives are not worthy of these glad tidings.

Consider next the verse: ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ أَنْتُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ تُحْبَرُونَ. The word حبر means to make someone happy and joyous.

The word أَزْوَاجُ is used in the Qur'ān to connote wives and also has some other meanings. For example, it also means something which is multifarious and has a lot of variety. In Sūrah Tāhā, it is said: وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِّنْ ثَبَاتٍ شَتَّى (٥٣:٢٠) (and We sent down water from the skies; thus we caused to grow from it vegetation of various types, (20:53)).

Similarly, it is also used in the Qur'ān to refer to groups who hold the same view and are companions to one another. For example:

56. O My servants! You have nothing to fear nor will you be sorrowful, who have believed in Our revelations and remained obedient. Enter Paradise, you and those who shared your beliefs; you shall be blessed with delight.

لَا تُمَدَّنْ عَيْنُكَ إِلَى مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْهُمْ (٨٨: ١٥)

And do not look at things which We have granted some of their groups. (15:88)

احْشُرُوا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَأَزْوَاجَهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ (٣٧: ٢٢)

Gather those who indulged in polytheism and also their companions and those things which they have been worshipping. (37:22)

وَكُنْتُمْ أَزْوَاجًا ثَلَاثَةً (٥٦: ٧)

On that day, you will be divided into three groups. (56:7)

In the light of these parallel verses, I am of the opinion that in the verse under discussion, the word أَزْوَاجُ refers to groups of people holding the same views and beliefs. I have thus translated this verse keeping in view this meaning. Though the level and rank of a person will be different with respect to the extent of his faith and nature of deeds, yet all believers will be treated with the favours of Paradise and will fully benefit from them. Earlier, the disbelievers and their associates and friends are mentioned and it is said that they will become enemies of one another. Here, in contrast, the situation which the believers will face is mentioned: they will be happy and rejoice in one another's company.

يُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِصِحَافٍ مِّنْ ذَهَبٍ وَأَكْوَابٍ وَفِيهَا مَا تَشْتَهِيهِ الْأَنْفُسُ وَتَلَذُّ الْأَعْيُنُ وَأَنْتُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (٧١: ٥٧)

The word صِحَاف refers to “plates and dishes”, and the أَكْوَاب means “cups”; just as the word ذَهَب (gold) occurs with صِحَاف it also occurs with أَكْوَاب; however, in order to avoid repetition, it is suppressed. I have revealed this suppression in the translation. The verse says that the boy-stewards of Paradise would continuously circulate among the companions of Paradise with plates and cups of gold for their hospitality.

The words وَفِيهَا مَا تَشْتَهِيهِ الْأَنْفُسُ وَتَلَذُّ الْأَعْيُنُ refer to the fact that in these plates and cups will be things which will be very desirable and also a treat to watch. There are some things which gave a good taste but they are not attractive in appearance. The Almighty will treat the believers in Paradise

57. They shall be served with golden dishes and golden cups and in them will be that which they are desirous of and with which their eyes rejoice in.

with such things which will not only be tasty but also eye-catching.

The words وَأَنْتُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ directly address the believers whereas the previous part of the verse addressed them indirectly. This change in style signifies special attention and favour. In other words, the Almighty will elaborately give glad tiding to them to rest assured that what they have been given is not transient in nature; they will remain in Paradise forever. One's delight about the greatest of favours stands compromised if it is known that the favour is temporary. For this reason, the Almighty will assure the companions of Paradise to benefit from Paradise without any inhibition or reservation. No one can deprive them of it.

وَتِلْكَ الْجَنَّةُ الَّتِي أُورِثْتُمُوهَا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٧٢)⁵⁸

An even greater glad tiding than the one mentioned earlier is that this Paradise has been given to them as a recompense of their deeds; in other words, it is not merely a gift; it is their right. If a person is rewarded with something which he has not earned, then the heart does is not truly happy. The Almighty has also given due consideration to this aspect of human nature and instead of regarding Paradise to be a mere gift from Him, He has regarded it to be the consequence of the efforts of the inhabitants of Paradise – the efforts which they expended in this world for the cause of truth.

لَكُمْ فِيهَا فَاكِهَةٌ كَثِيرَةٌ مِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ (٧٣)⁵⁹

In verse seventy one above, the edibles and drinks of the companions of Paradise were referred to. Mentioned in this verse are their tafakkuhat: to savor their taste-buds, there will be fruits of all kinds. Whichever they would want to eat will be at hand; there will be no fear of any reduction in this treasure.

إِنَّ الْمُجْرِمِينَ فِي عَذَابٍ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدُونَ (٧٤)⁶⁰

After a mention of the fate of the pious, the fate of the sinners is mentioned: they shall always dwell in the torment of Hell; they will never be able to free themselves of it.

58. And you will remain herein forever and this is the Paradise which you have inherited by virtue of your deeds.

59. And in it shall be many fruits from which you shall eat.

60. Indeed, the sinners shall endure forever the torment of Hell.

لَا يُفَقَّرُ عَنْهُمْ وَهُمْ فِيهِ مُبْلِسُونَ (٧٥)⁶¹

Such will be the all-embracing nature of this torment that it will not be taken away from them even temporarily nor will it be reduced in extent what to speak of being salvaged from it. The words وَهُمْ فِيهِ مُبْلِسُونَ imply that they will find themselves with no hope in this torment. Even in the worst of situations, the far-fetched hope does provide some assurance to a person that perhaps there will come a time when he will be rid of this torment or that this torment may reduce in severity. However, for these unfortunate people even this weak hope will not be there.

وَمَا ظَلَمْنَاهُمْ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا هُمُ الظَّالِمِينَ (٧٦)⁶²

The verse refers to the fact that this situation which they will face would be the result of any injustice of God to them: they themselves can only be blamed for it. Thus it is as if they themselves have been unjust and oppressive to their souls. Whatever arrangement was needed for their guidance was made by the Almighty; however, they did not value it; instead they spent all their lives as slaves to their desires – as a result of which they encountered this fate.

وَنَادُوا يَا مَالِكُ لِيَقْضِ عَلَيْنَا رَبُّكَ قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ مَا كُثُونَ (٧٧)⁶³

The state of eternal despair and hopelessness referred to in verse seventy five earlier is explained by this verse. They will ask the jailer of Hell: O Master! If there is no possibility of any mercy on us please request your Lord to finish us. At this, the jailer will immediately reply that they shall not be destroyed; they will have to remain in this condition. The last support to despair is death, but these people will be deprived of even this support, and this indeed is their greatest deprivation.

لَقَدْ جِئْنَاكُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَكُمْ لِلْحَقِّ كَارِهُونَ (٧٨)⁶⁴

After portraying the fate of the sinners, the discourse from this verse once again warns the Quraysh; the Almighty has presented the Qur'ān before them in the form of the truth; however, their majority is showing aversion to it; if they adhere to this attitude, then they must contemplate

61. It will not be lessened for them, and they shall remain in it in despair.

62. And We did not wrong them, but they themselves wronged their souls.

63. And they will cry out: "O master! Would that your Lord end our existence. He will reply: "You will remain in this situation."

64. And We came to you with the truth but your majority detested the truth.

the fate it will lead them to. If they now meet this dreadful fate, then this is not an injustice to them from the Almighty; it will be an injustice which they have done to themselves.

أَمْ أُنَبِّرُكُمْ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّا مُبْرِمُونَ (٧٩)⁶⁵

The word إبرام means “to make something strong and secure.” The expression إبرم الحبل would mean “to strongly twine the rope” Here it means to take a final decision on something.

This verse threatens the Quraysh with a decisive punishment, and in order to stress the threat the style has changed from direct address to indirect one as if they are not worthy of being spoken to directly. The verse states that if they have made a final decision, then the Almighty too will make a final decision. In other words, if they have decided to deny the Qur’ān and the messenger, then they should remember that as per His established practice, God will decide to destroy them.

I have explained this established practice of the Almighty regarding His messengers at many places in this *tafsīr* that when a nation decides to exile or kill the messenger sent to it, then God does not give it any further respite; He in fact takes the messenger and his companions in His refuge and destroys the rest of the nation. The verse refers to this very established practice of God: if the Quraysh have fully decided to deny their messenger, then they shall necessarily fall in the sphere of application of this established practice, and nothing will be able to save them. It is evident from this that as long as a nation is hesitant about accepting the call of its messenger, the Almighty keeps giving it respite; however, when it resolves to destroy the preacher and his call, then the final judgement of God visits it.

أَمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّا لَا نَسْمَعُ سِرَّهُمْ وَنَجْوَاهُمْ بَلَىٰ وَرُسُلُنَا لَدَيْهِمْ يَكْتَتُبُونَ (٨٠)⁶⁶

Though the Almighty is aware of every secret and every whispering of people, it is evident from the context that the reference in this verse is to secret whisperings which the Quraysh were doing in *dār al-nadwah* viz a viz killing or turning out the Prophet (sws) from Makkah. The implication is that these people should not be in the misconception that God is unaware of their conspiracies and secret conversation. He is fully aware of all their clandestine activities, and His angels are keeping a

65. Have they taken a firm decision so that We also make a firm decision.

66. Do they think that We cannot hear their secrets and their whispers” Yes! We are hearing and Our angels who are by their side, record it.

written record of each and every deed of theirs. When these people make a final decision about the Messenger of God, God's decision about them too will manifest itself. Then all their plans will end in failure.

قُلْ إِنْ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمَنِ وَلَدٌ فَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْعَابِدِينَ (٨١) سُبْحَانَ رَبِّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ (٨٢)⁶⁷

Here at the end, while referring to the discussion found in the opening verses of the *sūrah* viz a viz the refutation of divinity of the angels, a decisive declaration is made: The Prophet (sws) should tell these people that if it is proven that God does have children then, he – the Prophet (sws) – would be the first to worship them; however, the Lord of the heavens and the earth and of the throne is beyond such things that they are ascribing to Him without any basis. He alone is the creator of all these things and He alone is the master of this universe and solely rules it; neither is He in need of a son nor daughter, neither does He require a helper nor a partner.

فَذَرَهُمْ يَخْضُوا وَيَلْعَبُوا حَتَّى يُلَاقُوا يَوْمَهُمُ الَّذِي يُوعَدُونَ (٨٣)⁶⁸

The verse says that after giving this decisive channel, the Prophet (sws) should leave them to themselves; he should let them make whatever excuses they want to and let them indulge their frivolous talk until they encounter the day they are being threatened with. On the day, the reality will be revealed to them that those whom they worshipped regarding them to be god will be of no avail to them.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي فِي السَّمَاءِ إِلَهٌ وَفِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَهٌ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْعَلِيمُ (٨٤)⁶⁹

The verse states that God alone is the Lord of the heavens and He alone is the Lord of the earth and it is His will and intention which prevails in the heavens and the earth. The harmony found between the heavens and the earth shows that they are working under the will of a single powerful and sustaining being. If multiple wills had been present

67. Say: "If the Merciful God had a son, I will be the first to worship him." Exalted be the Lord of the heavens and the earth, the Lord of the Throne, above what they say.

68. Leave them to indulge in pleasantries and in jest until they face the day they are being threatened with.

69. And He alone is God in the heavens and He only is God on earth and only He is the real Wise and All-knowing One,

in them, they would have been destroyed.

The words **وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْعَلِيمُ** refer to the fact that God is wise and knowing; neither is any of His works devoid of wisdom nor is He dependent on anyone for His knowledge. Thus the false belief of intercession on the basis of which the Idolaters have become fearless of the Hereafter has no foundation. This belief is against the wisdom of God as well as His knowledge.

وَتَبَارَكَ الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَعِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ⁷⁰ (٨٥)

The word **تَبَارَكَ** encompasses in it the aspect of God's greatness as well as He being an embodiment of good and graciousness. The essential consequence of He being great and gracious is that only He should be feared and all hopes should be pinned only in Him. He is the king of whatever is between the heavens and the earth; so no one can dare have his own before Him or interfere in His will. Simultaneously, He has great mercy and graciousness; hence, He will deal with each in accordance with what His mercy will necessitate. People are not dependent on others to acquire His mercy.

The words **وَعِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ** imply that the knowledge of the hour of Judgement is only with God; if prophets of God are not able to tell its time of arrival, then it does not mean that it will not come. It is certain to come, and people must clearly understand that they will have to return to Him; on that Day, no one except Him will everyone return to and so they should not expect help from any other being.

وَلَا يَمْلِكُ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ الشَّفَاعَةَ إِلَّا مَنْ شَهِدَ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ⁷¹ (٨٦)

This verse explains the words **وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ** of the previous verse. The Idolaters are overcome with the false notion that in the Hereafter they will return to their alleged deities and intercessors who will be their protectors also; they will secure release for them from the grasp of God through their intercession. The verse says that those who the invoke

70. And extremely blessed is He Who has sovereignty over the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them! And He alone has knowledge of the Hour of Doom, and to Him shall you be recalled.

71. And those whom they invoke besides Him do not have the power to intercede for them except for those who will bear witness to the truth and they will fully know as well.

other than God have no authority to intercede. On the day, the decision will fully rest in the hands of God, and He will judge people with full justice. In Sūrah Mu'min the words are: وَاللَّهُ يَقْضِي بِالْحَقِّ وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ لَا يَفْضُلُونَ بِشَيْءٍ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ لَا يَفْضُلُونَ بِشَيْءٍ ۚ (40:20) (and God will decide with absolute justice and those who they invoke other than God will not judge any thing, (40:20)).

The exception in إِلَّا مَنْ شَهِدَ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ is severed (*munqati'*). What is implied is that on that day no one will have the authority to intercede; however, those whom the Almighty permits will bear witness to the truth and they will bear witness to that which they know. It is specified in the Qur'ān at many places that in the presence of God only those will be able to intercede who will be given permission from God and will only converse that much for which they are permitted. In Sūrah Tāhā, the words are: يَوْمَئِذٍ لَا تَنْفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ إِلَّا مَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمَنُ وَرَضِيَ لَهُ قَوْلًا (20: ١٠٩) (on that day, intercession will be of no avail to anyone except for whom God grants permission and desires that anything should be said about him, (20: 109)). Similarly, this is also explicitly stated that in the first place only that person will speak who will be permitted by God; then too he will utter only that which is the absolute truth. Thus, in Sūrah Nabā', it is stated: يَوْمَ يَقُومُ الرُّوحُ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ صَفًّا لَا يَتَكَلَّمُونَ إِلَّا مَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمَنُ وَقَالَ صَوَابًا (٧٨: ٣٨) (on the Day when Gabriel and the angels will stand arrayed; they will not speak unless whom the most Gracious allows and he shall speak the truth., (78:38)). Moreover, it is also explicitly stated that the near ones of God will utter whatever is in their knowledge; they will dare not utter anything that is not in their knowledge. In Sūrah Mā'idah, the following words of Jesus (sws) are cited: وَكُنْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا مَا دُمْتُ فِيهِمْ (٥: ١١٧) (I was a witness to them as long as I remained among them, (5:117)). In other words, what they did after Jesus (sws) passed away never came in his knowledge; only God is a witness to it. It is evident from this verse that the evidence presented by the prophets of God will relate to the period in which they were present; they will not say anything about what happened in later periods because they will have no knowledge of it.

وَلَئِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَهُمْ لَيَقُولَنَّ اللَّهُ فَأَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ (٨٧)

This verse expresses wonder at the Idolaters; they regard beings other than God to have the authority to intercede. The verse says that if they are asked about their creator; their answer in all cases will be God. It is

72. Yet if you ask them who created them, they will surely say: "God." Where then do they wander about?

really strange how they lose their senses after this answer by believing that their alleged deities are so close to God so that they can release any person they like from God's grasp and through their intercession can secure a high status for any person they want.

وَقِيلَ يَارَبِّ إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ قَوْمٌ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٨٨)⁷³

The word *قِيلَ* is co-ordinated to the word *بِالْحَقِّ* of the verse before the previous one. In other words, they will only say the truth and their testimony will be: Lord they themselves are to be blamed for not embracing faith; they were not prepared to take this step. The succeeding verse had merely come as a parenthetical one to express a modification (*istidrāk*). Thus the conjugate and conjugated sentence were not distanced from one another. Such examples can be seen in the previous *sūrahs* of this *tafsīr* and will be found in the coming ones as well.

Here it may be kept in mind that on the Day of Judgement, the Idolaters will present their alleged deities as an excuse of being led away from the truth; however, these deities will outright reject this claim. For example, it is specified in the Qur'ān that God will ask the angels whether the claim of the Idolaters of worshipping them is true. The angels will declare their explicit renunciation and say that they themselves are responsible for straying away from the truth and that they have no link with it. The Qur'ān states:

وَيَوْمَ يُحْشَرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا تَمَّ يَقُولُ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ أَهَؤُلَاءِ إِيَّاكُمْ كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ أَنْتَ وَلِيِّنَا مِنْ دُونِهِمْ بَلْ كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ الْجِنَّ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِهِمْ مُؤْمِنُونَ (٤٠-٤١)

And recall the day when He will gather everyone and then ask the angels: "Have these people been worshipping you?" They will reply: "Glory to you; You are our protector against them; in fact, they have been worshipping the jinn and a majority of them profess faith in them." (34:40-41)

The testimony of Jesus (sws) is mentioned in the following words:

وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ أَأَنْتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُونِي وَأُمَّيَّ إِلَهَيْنِ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ قَالَ سُبْحَانَكَ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أَقُولَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِحَقِّ إِنْ كُنْتُ قُلْتُهُ فَقَدْ عَلِمْتَهُ (١١٦)

73. And the words of those who will bear witness to the truth will be: "Lord, these people never professed faith."

God will ask: “Jesus son of Mary, did you tell people: ‘regard me and my mother as gods except God?’” He will reply: “Glory be to you! How was it befitting for me to say something which I had no authority. If I had said this, it would have been in Your knowledge.” (5:116)

This reality is mentioned in Sūrah Aḥqāf in the following words:

وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّن يَدْعُو مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَنْ لَا يَسْتَجِيبُ لَهُ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَهُمْ عَنِ
دُعَائِهِمْ غَافِلُونَ وَإِذَا حُشِرَ النَّاسُ كَانُوا لَهُمْ أَعْدَاءً وَكَانُوا بِعِبَادَتِهِمْ كَافِرِينَ (٤٦: ٥-٦)

And who is in greater error than those who invoke things other than God which will never be able to respond to them till the Day of Judgement and they are also unaware of their worship! And when people are called together, they will declare themselves their enemies and will disown their worship. (46:5-6)

فَاصْفَحْ عَنْهُمْ وَقُلْ سَلَامٌ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ (٨٩)⁷⁴

These words direct the Prophet (sws) that if these people are after seeing their fate, then leave them alone and ignore them the way Abraham (sws) had done with his father. The word سَلَامٌ connotes “good-bye”.

The words فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ imply that the fate which they await is not far off; they shall soon witness it.

With the grace of God, I come to the end of the *tafsīr* of this *sūrah*.
فَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ (thus gratitude be to God on this)

Raḥmānābād

22nd April 1976 AD

21st Rabi al-thānī 1396 AH

74. So ignore them and say: “Peace be to you.” Thus, they shall soon come to know.